HOW TO BEAT YOUR Husband

DR. STEVE OGAN

VISIT…

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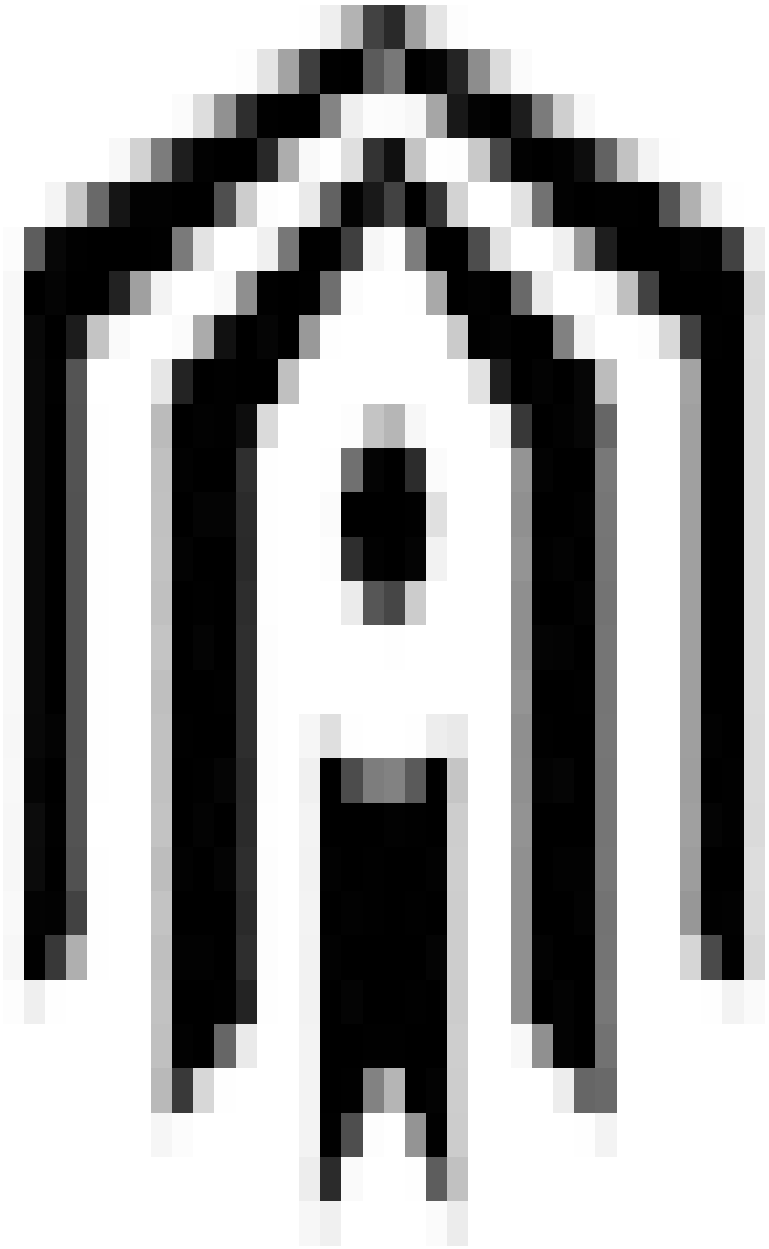

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Chapter One

WHAT EXACTLY DO MEN WANT?

Marriage is a unique institution established by God. Martin Luther the 14th Century reformer said it is God's way of explaining his relationship with any man saved by grace. Just as a man is married to a woman so a believer is married to God. Our maker is our husband (Isaiah 54:5).

God is a God of purpose. He established the institution of marriage for:

- Procreation
- Protection
- Partnership
- Preservation of Purity

Man was given a mandate to procreate physically through sexual intercourse. He was commanded to increase and multiply spiritually. The man was to protect the woman and both were to protect their children. The man and woman were to operate as partners—the wife helping the husband to fulfill the purpose of procreation, protection and preservation of purity.

To fulfill their purpose each member of the family was given clearly defined roles.

- The husband was made the head

• But he was made head in love

• The wife was made the support

• But she was made a support in submission

• The children were to be obedient to their parents

• But the parents were not to discourage the children

• The servants were to serve without eye-service

• But they were not to be denied their due wages. (Col. 3: 18-25).

Marriage is beautiful when individual members of the family fulfill their divinely stipulated roles. The reverse is the case when any member fails to behave in conformity with the divine role assigned to him or her. The situation is even more compounded where the man fails to fulfil his dual role of leading the family and doing so in love. The family is usually in confusion, especially, if the woman fails to tackle the situation from God's point of view.

THE CASE OF DANIEL AND MARILYN

Marilyn and Daniel had only been married for six months, but had grown so far apart that they were like old disgruntled couples, tired of seeing each other's face. Marilyn could not understand the sudden change in Daniel. All efforts to get Daniel to respond to her attempts to mend fences failed.

"This is not the Daniel I knew," Marilyn muttered to herself. "What could be the problem? How could a man once so lively become so dull? What am I not doing right?" She had so many questions without answers. Her "Prince Charming" had become a dumb-mute. He comes back from work, turns on the television and

gets buried in a newspaper. From all indications he used the television to shut out any communication with her and the newspaper had thus become his mask.

Consequently the fountain of love and all the beautiful names he used to call her dried up. The humour that previously set her ribs cracking with laughter disappeared. The sweet things were no longer heard. The man who could not keep out of her presence now wanted to be left alone. The pain was too much to bear. The loneliness ached her heart.

The trouble was that there was no one with whom to share her plight. She had moved from Mombasa to Nairobi to be with her husband soon after the wedding. Her friends were all in Mombasa. Besides, she couldn't bring herself to tell them even if they were around. Didn't the preacher at their wedding warn against inviting a third party to solve their marital problems?

Yet she needed help. Daniel had dismissed her complaints with a wave of the hand on the few occasions she summoned up courage to talk to him. Now anger, bitterness and resentment were building up in her. She was increasingly touchy, snapping at him at the least provocation. All day she sat home planning to "deal" with him. She blamed herself for leaving her good job in Mombasa, only to sit at home awaiting the return of a husband who did not appreciate her in any way.

Arguments and harsh words became a routine phenomenon at home. The gap was widening as the days went by. Marilyn was so bitter. Her savings were gone. Her self-confidence was daily being eroded. Daniel would sometimes deny her money to buy even sanitary towels. He continued to be a lone ranger. They rarely talked to each other. Life was becoming unbearable for Marylyn. In desperation, she decided to do something about the situation.

On this particular evening, Daniel had just returned home from work. As usual

he was seated in front of the television watching a football game. “I want to talk to you,” Marilyn told him, almost without any emotion. ‘‘What for? Can’t you see I am busy?’’ Daniel countered, his voice rising with resentment.

Marilyn did not say another word. With a flint-like determination, she marched into the kitchen, ready to strike. She soon came back with a hammer in her hand. Before Daniel could read the handwriting on the wall she had smashed the television screen and was now rushing towards him. The neighbours heard the commotion and dashed in to separate the newlyweds who were sprawled on the floor in a do or die battle. This was a real shock to neighbours because Daniel and Marilyn were professing Christians. What is in man that makes him hate what he should love? Why does a man marry a woman only to make his television a companion instead of her? Why must a wife cajole her husband to communicate? These are difficult questions, but an understanding of the unique make up of men can help give an answer. When men recognize their need for a wife, they will do anything to win a woman’s love. They will gladly give their time, talents and money if only to win her. But it seems their desire and emotions, die immediately after the wedding.

ADAM’S FATAL MISTAKE

Adam had a dire need for a companion. God created the animals and birds and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them. This was the first test that Adam was given. He passed the test very well. He gave the animals and birds their proper names. Adam did not see the quality of a wife in the snake or the character of a companion in the dog. The animals found companionship one with another, “. . . But for Adam there was not found an help meet for him” (Gen. 2:20). God then caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam and then formed the woman with a rib extracted from the man.

Immediately Adam saw Eve, his first exclamation was. “This is it . . . !”

(Genesis 22:23, Living Bible). ‘‘This is what I am looking for. This is what I did not see in the snake. This is really what I need.’’ It was love at first sight. Adam was so elated that he wrote the first poem ever—“. . . This is now the bone of my bones and the flesh of my flesh . . .” (Genesis 2:23).

The honey-moon began no sooner Adam said, “This is it!” He first approached Eve, gave her a name and swept her off her feet. They were always together, hand in hand. They shared their thoughts, expressed their deepest emotions. They planned together, laughed together and encouraged each other.

The snake saw it all. He hated the love between Adam and Eve. Besides, he was still smarting from the pain of Adam’s rejection of him as a helpmeet. “What’s special about Eve that you preferred her to me?” the serpent probably asked. As the days went by, Adam was becoming more and more familiar with Eve. The novelty of talking to another human being was wearing off. The emotion of communing with a new wife was loosening its hold. Adam began to mind his own business, occasionally letting Eve do her own thing. While they were initially inseparable, they now met once in a while. Both moved from companionship to temporary separation.

One day the serpent trailed Adam and Eve to a part of the Garden of Eden. He persuaded Eve to eat the forbidden fruit. She gave some of the fruit to Adam. He too sinned and turned round to refer to Eve derogatively as “the woman you gave me”, rather than “my wife”,—“the bone of my bones”.

WHAT IT MEANS TO BEAT YOUR HUSBAND

How do you respond to a man who wants to do his own thing? How do you win over the man who once loved you enough to make you his wife but now gives little or no attention to you? What must a wife do to rekindle the love of a

husband who treats her with contempt? How do you tackle the negative aspects of his character? What must you do to win back an unfaithful husband?

These are the issues we hope to discuss in this book. Many women have given up because of their husbands' negative attitude. Four out of every five families in Africa are improperly constituted. The divorce rate in Europe and America has reached astronomical proportions. The home is now like a war front where husbands beat up wives and wives beat up husbands.

God is interested in our fighting. But he distinguishes between the good fight and the bad fight. God wants you to beat your husband when he is unfaithful or wicked towards you. But not by knocking him repeatedly with a hammer. You can beat your husband by:

• Overcoming his hatred with love.

• Vanquishing his anger with meekness and a quiet spirit.

• Surpassing his unromantic attitude with true romance.

• Excelling over his bad character with the fruit of the Spirit.

You don't have to beat your husband with a club; you can beat him with godly living. You don't have to beat your husband with bitterness. You can beat him with forgiveness. "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith'' (1 John 5:4).

Are you born again? If you are, then you are an overcomer. You don't have to be overcome by divorce. You can get your husband to be the kind of man God wants him to be. Believe that God can change your husband if you apply the

practical guidelines contained in this book.

If you are not yet born again, you will need to make peace with God. Confess your sins to him and invite Jesus into your life. You cannot overcome all the ugly things your husband has done to you until you let God take control of your life. Sincerely pray this prayer of faith:

Dear Jesus, I invite you into my life. Forgive me my sins. Forgive me for trying to fight in my own strength.

I believe that Jesus died on the cross for me.

His blood was shed for me.

Cleanse me with the blood of Jesus.

Take absolute control of my life and the situation in my family.

I forgive my husband.

I forgive whosoever has hurt me.

And I receive your forgiveness now.

Thank you for saving me.

I declare that I am born again.

I believe that I am an overcomer.

Blessed be your name, in Jesus name I pray.

Amen.

Chapter Two

WHEN HE IS NOT SAVED

Living with an unbeliever is like living with a stubborn blind man, who does not believe that he is blind. He often refuses direct spiritual assistance, especially from a wife who is born again. This situation can be frustrating. This is why God warns us not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers.

Some women however get married as unbelievers, to equally unbelieving husbands. God eventually intervenes in their lives and saves them; but does not permit them to leave their unbelieving husbands (1 Cor. 7:12-14).

Conflict is bound to arise when a wife is saved and begins to adopt Biblical patterns of living when her husband is still a non-believer. If you are saved and your husband is not, you will easily understand what we are saying. There are various areas of conflict.

Some women think that because they are saved and their husbands are not, they should:

• Take over the leadership of the home.

• Unilaterally stop the buying, selling and consumption of alcohol at home.

• Compel everyone, including the man, to regularly attend church on Sunday and mid-week services.

• Change the family church from an Orthodox to a Pentecostal church.

• Suspend visiting of relatives suspected to be witches and wizards.

• Transfer the children from a public to a private Christian school where they can be given a religious education.

• Start a weekly or daily house fellowship at home.

• Intensify the move to save the husband through daily reading of scriptures and verbal rebukes for his sins.

These may seem like noble goals that every believing wife should aspire to, in order to make her family truly Christian. But you must tread softly and patiently. The best way to alienate your husband is to implement these seemingly noble objectives without caution, or due regard to his feelings.

Firstly, salvation does not give a wife the legal right to usurp the authority of the husband. Dora got saved and immediately became fervent and zealous in the work of God. She now knew the difference between a spirit-filled life and empty religion. Richard, her husband, was very religious, yet he had not given up smoking and drinking even though he was the choir master in an Orthodox church. Dora moved to a Pentecostal church without consulting or getting approval from her husband. Richard did not stop her, but did not approve of her decision.

Conflict arose, however, when Dora began to dominate the spiritual leadership at home. Though Richard was not born again he read and interpreted the Bible at their daily family worship. But Dora now took over that function, again without consultation. The family worship became a time for, what Richard later called, “tirades’’ against his smoking and drinking.

He stopped attending the family altar and began to drink heavily. This gave Dora more occasions for verbal rebukes. Richard eventually got into drugs and would not even go to church any more.

Why did Richard respond the way he did? Because no unsaved man wants to be told what to do and how to do it. Men are naturally egocentric. They want to be seen as being in charge even when they shirk their responsibilities. They want to be sure they are dictating the pace of major decisions. Above all, they don't want to be rebuked openly when they are wrong. What then must a believing wife know about her salvation in relation to her unbelieving husband?

Realize that God saved you by grace, not because of your works. The same will be true for your husband.

Recognize that God wants to use the very kind of divine love that saved you, to save your husband.

Respect the fact that your life may be the only daily "Bible reading" your husband has access to.

Respond to the challenge of living the Spirit-filled life able to produce the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23).

Avoid an "I know it all" attitude even if your husband is spiritually dead.

Reason with him when he does not understand the spiritual implication of his actions.

Knowing all this is one thing, but practically applying this knowledge in positive

actions is another thing altogether.

LOVE IS THE KEY

Betty Malz rightly points out that ‘‘to live with an unbeliever takes special love’’. Every wife must ask God for that kind of love. The love that will save your husband must be patient, able to endure all things. It must not be easily provoked. It must not behave unseemingly or inconsistently.

Sara Douglas demonstrated this kind of patient and enduring love. She waited for sixty-eight years before her husband was saved. She once told Betty Malz, “don’t talk to him about God, talk to God about him”. Living the life of a Christian is the means by which you can draw your husband into the Kingdom of God. Here are some practical hints on how you can love an unlovable husband.

• Clean him up and feed him when he comes home drunk.

• Completely avoid making direct or indirect reference to his sins, no matter how grievous they are.

• Don’t fight him back if he beats you physically. But please escape for your life if his rage is likely to do you permanent damage.

• Avoid any temptation to nag him.

• Honour and respect him for who he is-the head of the home.

• Show interest in the things that interest him most.

• Help him with his business or office work.

• Teach the children to honour and respect him-and ensure they do.

• Publicly praise and acknowledge him.

• Give him credit for achievements even when you were directly the motivator.

• Ask his opinion on personal matters that concern you.

• Always forgive him and make him know that you have forgiven him.

Think more about what you can give to your husband than what he must give to you. The gift of love which covereth a multitude of sins is the greatest gift of all.

Tonje was a brute of a man. He often came home drunk and ready for a fight. He and Amara, his wife, had a rough marriage full of fights. Verbal and physical confrontations were a regular aspect of their relationship at home. The fact that they lived alone, as they had no children, aggravated the matter.

This was so until Amara became a Christian. One night Tonje came home in a drunken stupor. Instead of releasing the usual verbal missiles, Amara opened her arms of love to receive him. She took him to the bath-room and gave him a scrub. She made a warm drink for him and later, when he was revived, fed him like a baby. This practice went on for some time. Tonje did not seem to respond to her kind gesture. He continued to drink and remained irresponsible in other ways. Amara, however, no longer called him names nor fought back.

A miracle, however, happened one day. She had as usual cleaned him up after a drinking spree. She prepared his best food, sat him up on the bed with pillow props and began to feed him. Everywhere was quiet as it was late in the night. Both husband and wife were not saying a word to each other. Like a mother, Amara kept on scooping spoonfuls of food into Tonje’s mouth. Suddenly he stopped chewing and began to sob and tremble. He cried like a baby. Amara, still silent, took his head into her breast and began to weep with him. He was healed instantly. Their marriage was restored and today Tonje is a responsible member

of the body of Christ.

PRAYER: ANOTHER KEY

Sarah Douglas says “Don’t talk to him about God, but talk to God about him . . . Self-righteous women talk too much. The Lord can do more with him in two months than you can do in two years. Silence and prayer make the best combination”.

Vena Poole proved it. There was a ten year interregnum in her relationship with Ron. They were divorced for that length of time. She prayed fervently for God to send her husband back to her. God did not seem to hear her prayers or if he did he probably was not keen on answering. But this was because she was not praying according to God’s perfect will. She changed her prayer to: “Lord draw him back to you.” Her prayer was answered. Ron Poole was saved. Better still, her marriage was restored and today, both of them have a ministry of reconciling husbands and wives.

When next you cook for your husband, why not ask God to bless the man who will eat the food? A woman had a creative way of asking God to save her husband. When making his bed, she would pray: “Please, Lord, when he rests his body on this bed, let him know the peace that passeth all understanding.” When polishing his shoe she will mutter: “Let his steps be ordered into your Kingdom.” You too can pray likewise.

Bind the spirit of the anti-Christ in your husband. What you bind on earth is bound in heaven. Loose your husband from alcoholism. What you loose on earth is loosed in heaven. Cause the scales to fall off his eyes. Enter into aggressive spiritual warfare on his behalf. God says, “Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance . . .” (Psalm 2:8).

This may involve a long and gruesome battle. But remember that the battle is the Lord's and the victory is yours. God promised a woman that he will save her husband. She prayed and waited patiently for 27 years, then her husband died. But she would not give up. She refused to believe that he was dead. God's promise was not yet fulfilled, so how could he die? She knelt by his hospital bed, prayed for 13 hours and her husband woke up-delivered from death and saved subsequently.

Salvation is the first key to true love and romance. If you want to overcome your husband's ungodly antics, pray him into the Kingdom first. "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness and all other things will be added unto you.'' This includes your husband and a happy home.

In conclusion, show your husband double love. Submit to him even if it means occasionally missing out in fellowships. Don't make the church your first home. Get back home in time to cook and serve your family. Witness the love of Christ to your husband by your character and conduct. Above all, endure all things. Suffer for righteousness sake. God will surely save your husband and safeguard your marriage.

Chapter Three

WHEN HE IS STINGY

Some men are saved but their bank accounts are not. They believe in serving the Lord as long as their pockets are exempted.

This becomes a bigger problem when this attitude is carried into marriage. Some men may be married but do not believe that their wives have any claim to their wealth. Agnes married such a man. Though he had a good job, the family was perpetually in need of basic things such as food and clothing. Two of the children stayed home for two months because their school fees had not been paid. The situation was compounded by the fact that Agnes was a typical housewife without an income or savings of her own.

Money was always the major source of conflict in their marriage. Bitter words were exchanged by both parties. Agnes was portrayed as ‘‘frivolous’’ in her demands. Her husband felt that she was a bad manager of resources. He even insinuated that she was a thief. ‘‘I will not be surprised if you are banking my money in your village,’’ he accused her. “You skin flint,” Agnes flung back at him. “Do you have any money? If you count the “chicken feed” you give me for housekeeping as money, then you are mistaken. Go and find out what your fellow men give their wives every month.’’ Such tirades were a daily occurrence.

One woman took a bitter swipe at her stingy husband during a similar confrontation. She told him that he was “worse than an infidel”.

True, the Bible teaches that “. . . if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel” (1 Timothy 5:8). But this should not warrant you to call your husband “an infidel”, even if he is one.

You cannot get much out of a stingy man through insults. You will end up being the loser and so will your children. No matter how difficult the financial situation may be, learn to appreciate your husband for the few occasions he gives you money, even if this is small, be thankful.

Above all, “Let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which you are called in one body . . .” (Col. 3:15a). Fear and anxiety will lead you into more and more conflicts with your husband. This is not God’s will.

GET SOMETHING DOING

Men love women who are financially independent, but not completely independent of them. Most husbands want their wives to assist them in meeting the material needs of the home. Such women do not only have better self-esteem, they are also more respected by their husbands. Indeed, to completely depend on your husband for everything, including basic things like money for sanitary pads is not a healthy practice.

The man may not complain initially, especially when all is well. But more and more tension mounts in him as the economic crunch and inflation begin to bite. He becomes grumpy and may one day verbalize his resentment. This situation is usually compounded by the fact that most men are totally ignorant of the rate of inflation in the market place. Their idea of weekly allowances are usually not enough provisions from their wives’ point of view.

This is why every woman should get something doing to supplement the husband’s income, especially, when this is not enough. The virtuous woman in Proverbs 31 did not entirely depend on her husband. This was probably why “the

heart of her husband doth safely trust in her. She did him good and not evil all the days of her life" (Prov. 31:11-12).

"She seeketh wool and flax and worketh willingly with her hands. She is like the merchant's ship; she bringeth her food from afar . . . She considereth a field and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard" (Proverbs 31:13-14, 16).

She was so diligent that her husband was "known in the gates when he sitteth among the elders of the land" (v23). He was not known by his name but as 'the husband of the virtuous woman''. You too can get your husband to be known by your name due to your hard work. Instead of being known simply as James, he can be called "the husband of diligent Kate".

HOW TO BEAT A STINGY HUSBAND

• Renounce laziness in your life.

• Get a handiwork or a source of income, which will not unduely conflict with your role as a home maker.

• Focus your attention on God as the provider, rather than on your husband (Phil. 4:19).

• Plan big, but begin small and don't despise the days of small beginnings.

• Never deny your husband food because he did not provide the money with which it was bought.

• Serve him like a king even if you provided the money with which food was purchased.

• Occasionally give your husband pocket money and buy him presents even when he does not do these things for you. “Give and it shall be given unto you . . .”

• Never quarrel or complain about his lapses in providing for the family, especially when you can adequately cover him up.

• Don’t buy and register household equipment in your name alone. Use both your husband’s name and yours.

All these may sound foolish to the natural man. But the foolishness of God is wisdom. There is really no other way you can beat a stingy husband. God’s counsel works if you apply it prayerfully.

We used to have problems in this area. As a husband I felt that supporting outsiders in need was more important than meeting the needs of our family. I saw it as a sacrifice to deny myself, my wife and the children our legitimate needs to meet the demands of strangers. Unfortunately my wife saw it as not providing enough for the family. She drew my attention to this anomaly, without insisting that sacrifice should not be made. She was however insistent on a proper balance.

I did not change this attitude for a long time. But this was as long as she just talked about the problem without practical action. I noticed that she began to do small businesses. This enabled her to regularly buy clothes for me and our children. What my wife was doing dawned on me after about two years. I realized that she had practically changed my wardrobe. Virtually all the clothes I was wearing were bought by her. This challenged me to reconsider my view of sacrificial giving. I decided to make all the sacrifice I could in matters directly related to my personal needs, without denying my wife and children their basic needs for food, clothes and shelter. We still make sacrifices as a family, but a proper balance is maintained.

Chapter Four

WHEN HE IS UNFAITHFUL

It is believed that three out of every five married people are not faithful to their nuptial vows. The practice of immorality is an open door to marital problems and divorce. Many women do not know how to handle their unfaithful husbands and this has compounded the problem. Where there could have been healing and restoration, immaturity on the part of the aggrieved party has led to the breakup of the family.

Rose met her husband with another woman in a shopping centre. She had for long suspected that he was unfaithful to her but had no concrete proof. Rose grabbed this “one in a million evidence”. She was too overwhelmed with anger to think or act properly. She ran straight to the door, pulled the woman out of the car and began to beat her. Rose was screaming like a mad woman. “Come, come and see the woman who is trying to snatch my husband,’’ she called to those passing by. The other woman looked dumbfounded and frozen. Rose saw this as evidence of guilt and went on to tear her dress.

It took the combined team of sympathetic people and the police to rescue the woman from Rose’s clutches. Her husband was too embarrassed to say a word. True, he had been unfaithful on a few occasions, but not with this particular woman, who just happened to be a friend’s wife. He managed to leave the place, but did not go back home.

How do you beat an unfaithful husband? Do you smash the head of his mistress, like Rose attempted to do? Do you confront him openly, calling him names to the hearing of neighbours? Or do you become unfaithful to him, to pay him back in his own coin?

Your answer will depend on the depth of your relationship with God. Many Christians in this situation respond like unbelievers. This is a pity. Rose claimed to be born again, but the fruits of salvation did not manifest in her actions. An unfaithful husband is already under the wrath of God. Infact he is already condemned and very guilty, regardless of pretenses. The Bible says, “But whoso commiteth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding: he that doeth it destroyeth his own soul. A wound and dishonour shall he get and his reproach shall not be wiped away” (Prov. 6:32-33).

To break your husband’s head for infidelity is to wound an already wounded man. To call him names and disgrace him in public is to dishonour an already dishonoured man. We don’t think this is necessary. Neither do we think you will gain anything by being unfaithful to spite him. “Whoso committed adultery (whether man or woman) . . . lacketh understanding: he that doeth it destroyeth his own soul.”

Many wives are infact tacitly responsible for their Husband’s infidelity. Betty Malz, in Making Your Husband Feel Loved, says that, “Many a woman will spend three hours in a beauty salon and cook for two hours to prepare a meal but won’t spend twenty minutes in the bedroom to satisfy her mate’s sexual need” (p. 110).

Some women use sex as a weapon for settling domestic quarrels. Others use it as a bait to capture material rewards from their husbands. One husband was very bitter because his wife told him, “No new dress, no sex”. He bought the dresses all right, but felt like a man soliciting the services of a prostitute.

Many men cannot stand the undue denial of what legitimately belongs to them. This partly explains why they are so quick to engage in extra-marital sex affairs.

A creative husband wrote a letter to his wife, probably as a means of restraining himself from an unholy union with another woman. He began the letter with such tenderness and humour as to melt any heart.

My ever loving wife,

During the past year I have attempted to seduce you 365 times. I succeeded 36 times. This averages once every ten days. The following is a list of the excuses made on the unsuccessful occasions.

We will wake the children	7	times
It’s too hot	15	“
It’s too cold	3	“
Too tired	19	“
It’s too early	9	“
It’s too late	16	“
Pretending to be asleep	33	“
Windows open-neighbours will hear	3	“
Your back ached	16	“
Toothache	2	“
Headache	26	“
Giggling fit	2	“
I’ve had too much	4	“
Not in the mood	21	“
The baby is crying	18	“
Watched late night show	7	“
Mudpack on	15	“
Grease on face	12	“
Reading Sunday paper	6	“
We have company in the next room	7	“
Your parents were staying with us	5	“

My parents were staying with us 5 “
Is that all you ever think about? 105 “

Do you think you could improve our record this coming year? And then he signs off with his trademark tenderness and loving touch thus:

Your Ever-loving husband.

(Source: Jack Dominian Marital Breakdown)

Many men are not as “ever loving” as this husband. They run off with another woman with or without genuine excuse. What must you do as a wife to forestall such a calamity?

BE A REBEKAH TO HIM

Rebekah was the wife of Isaac. Her name means ‘‘captivating’’. She captivated her husband, true to her name. Though he had no direct hand in wooing her, and there was little or no courtship before their marriage, she was attractive enough for Isaac to accept without objection. “And the damsel was very fair to look upon, a virgin, neither had any man known her . . .”

You must captivate your husband with internal and external beauty. Internal beauty refers to a spiritual adornment of fine and refined character. Some women think that this is enough to captivate their husbands. No! No! No! There must be good balance. Take good care of your external features. Isaac loved Rebekah partly because of her rare ability to combine external beauty with the beauty of holiness.

No wonder Isaac could not forgo playing, petting and sharing companionship with his wife even in a foreign land, though he had lied that she was his sister. She captivated him and he responded naturally, the dangers notwithstanding. “And it came to pass, when he (Isaac) had been there a long time, that Abimelech king of the Philistines looked out at a window, and saw, and, behold Isaac was sporting with Rebekah his wife”

(Genesis 26:8, 9).

The way they played and hugged each other convinced the king that the relationship was more than a brother-sister-relationship. Abimelech called Isaac and told him pointedly, “behold, of a surety she is thy wife: and how saidest thou, she is my sister . . .” (Genesis 26:9).

Can people easily identify your marital life by the way you captivate your husband? Are you attractive enough for him to play with you openly? Will your husband be proud to walk with you, hand in hand, on the street? If your answer is no, or you are not sure, then you need to work hard on your appearance.

Think of how he was attracted to you before the wedding. You must have kept your figure and taken time to impress him whenever you had a date. Why then do you deny him the very feature that encouraged him to marry you in the first instance?

Generally, men are attracted to women because of their physical appearance. After marriage some women become careless about their looks. They eat too much, avoid exercise and begin to look ordinary. Some leave their hair unkempt and forget to present their bodies as a living proof of their beauty. Their husbands begin to look elsewhere for satisfaction. And before long some men completely switch their allegiance. Bitterness and resentment creeps in and

divorce becomes an eventual outcome of a problem which could have been averted.

One husband could no longer walk hand in hand or side by side with his wife because of her heavy weight. She practically had no neck. The head seemed to rest on her shoulders. The man was always embarrassed with shouts of “fatty, fatty” or “elephant” whenever he went out with her. She could easily pass for a heavy weight boxer. The husband detested her obesity and used it as an excuse for infidelity.

WINNING BACK AN UNFAITHFUL HUSBAND

Betty noticed that her husband of four years had become cold towards her. He no longer hugged or kissed her. He preferred to sleep in the visitors’ room rather than in their own bedroom. She investigated the reasons for this behaviour and discovered that Peter was having extra-marital relations with his new secretary. Betty was devastated; especially that Peter claimed to be a Christian. She did not know whether to confront him or to just pack her things and leave. She later on prayerfully summoned up courage to confront him. He did not deny it, but would not tell her what she did to deserve such infidelity.

One day, Betty decided to make a secret trip to the office when Peter was away on a business trip. She walked in to the secretary’s office, sat down and began to discuss business as if she was a new customer. Betty did not reveal her identity as the Managing Director’s wife. She talked with the woman “sharing” her husband and was so calm that she even surprised herself. Her husband’s secretary was not just courteous, she was simply charming. She was slim; all dressed up, and very attractive, even to Betty.

The two women at first talked about business, but even veered into personal

matters. Betty left, after a most revealing encounter, promising to call again. Since she knew when her husband would return, she fulfilled her promise before that time. Her real identity was still not revealed.

Peter came back and was given a report of business ventures while he was away. The secretary was particular about Betty's visitation. "What company does she represent?" the boss asked. "She seems to be on her own," the secretary answered. "She was so enthusiastic about what we do that she is willing to undergo our training." "By the way, what is her name?" Peter asked. His countenance immediately fell when the secretary said, "I think her first name is Betty."

Meanwhile, Betty had carefully documented the internal and external qualities that made her husband's secretary so attractive. She refused to be bitter towards her, though she hated what her husband was doing with her. Betty realized that she had allowed her physical appearance to dwindle over the years. Her hair was unkempt. Her dressing was archaic. She realized that this had driven Peter to seemingly greener pastures.

Betty made a determination to do something about her marriage. She went to the saloon, made a new hair style and began to change her wardrobe. Rather than just tie a leso around her waist, she began to dress up in anticipation of Peter's return from work. She also prepared appetizing meals for him.

Interestingly, she resisted the temptation to nag him for his infidelity. But she presented the matter to God and asked Him for grace to forgive Peter. Such was her determination that she refused to confront his secretary. Betty believed that God was her "very present help in time of trouble".

It didn't take long for Peter to recognize the external and internal changes in his

wife. He moved from the visitors' room back into their matrimonial bed. He also eventually stopped going out with the secretary, who was now aware that the "customer" was in fact the wife of the boss.

HOW TO BEAT AN UNFAITHFUL HUSBAND

• Don't ever enter into a verbal or physical confrontation with his mistress.

• Discuss your husband's infidelity with him lovingly after much prayer.

• Never confront him on the basis of a rumour or mere suspicion. This may drive him to be unfaithful if the suspicion is unfounded.

• Find out how your attitude or character may have driven him to be unfaithful.

• Determine to forgive and win him back. Divorce may be a legitimate option, but it is not God's perfect will.

• Plan a strategy through which you can rectify your character flaws.

• Re-examine your attitude to sex. Find out how you can meet his needs here. His sexual fulfilment can make a big difference in your marriage.

• Love your husband in a way no other person can. Give the other woman a run for her life with your good deeds.

• Make your home heaven on earth. Let peace, joy and serenity reign. Avoid tension, bitterness, nagging and unforgiveness.

• Constantly bind the spirit of adultery. Loose your husband from the grips of immorality. Break every ungodly relationship with him. Remember, "What God has joined together no man should put asunder".

The two greatest weapons with which to excel over an unfaithful husband are

love and prayer. Fight on your knees. Love the sinner, though you hate his sin.

THREE AREAS OF DISSATISFACTION

Remember, self-examination will help you identify why your husband is unfaithful. Re-examine his attitude to your physical outlook and hygiene. Re-evaluate the extent to which you submit or humble yourself to him. Don't let the devil deceive you and don't lie to yourself. Find out if your cooking meets his need for food.

There are three areas of potential dissatisfaction in a man's assessment of his wife. These are her physical beauty, her submission to him, and her ability to satisfy his appetite for food and sex. Naomi, Ruth's mother in-law, instructed her carefully in these areas when she was about to marry Boaz. First she said, "Wash thyself therefore and anoint thee, and put thy raiment upon thee." This was good counsel in the area of physical beauty. Secondly, Naomi said, "Get thee down to the floor." This was godly advice in the areas of humility and submission. Finally, she asked Ruth to, ". . . make not thyself known until he shall have done eating and drinking" (Ruth 3:3).

Some women do not seem to appreciate the importance of food in the life of many men. This explains why Naomi advised Ruth to wait until Boaz had finished eating before she presented her needs to him. Change your method if you are in the habit of presenting the needs of the family to your husband before you have satisfied his stomach or given him adequate time to rest after work. There is a time for everything.

Cook his best meals. Serve him on time. Remember that the way to a man's heart is his stomach. Never give another woman a chance to steal your husband because he enjoys her food more than yours. Go for refresher courses in cookery

if you are not very good in this area. You can ask your friends to teach you. Do all you can to win your husband. No price is too big to pay. God will honour your efforts.

Chapter Five

WHEN HE DOES NOT COMMUNICATE

Communication is the art of talking and listening to someone talk. It can be verbal or non-verbal. Consequently, it is also the science of acting on the basis of someone's perceived needs, with a view to meeting them.

Many husbands don't know how to communicate. Crucial decisions affecting the family are sometimes taken and executed without consultation with the wives. A man worked for more than 25 years, retired but had difficulty in getting his gratuity paid. His wife knew about the problem and prayed fervently for God to intervene. She continued to pray long after her prayers were answered. But this was because her husband did not tell her when the gratuity was paid. He collected the money and banked it in a fixed deposit. Meanwhile the wife was still praying and fasting for God to intervene.

Another man began to build a house in his village without informing his wife. She got to know when his architect, who assumed she was aware, reported the progress of the building to her when the husband was away on a business trip.

These may seem to be extreme cases. Yet eighty percent of the problems in most marriages have their origin in lack of adequate communication.

Sigmund Freud, the famous psychologist, once said: "After thirty years of studying them, I ask myself; what is it that women want?"

Men are quick to ask questions, but slow to find out what women really want. The often unspoken plea on the lips of many women is, "Talk to me, please talk

to me". Some wives don't give a damn about what their husbands talk about, provided they just talk. This graphically depicts the extent of men's inability to communicate. But what can a wife do to overcome this problem?

UNDERSTANDING MEN

The needs of a wife will be better understood if she understands the nature of her husband. This is true for the husband also.

Men and women have different goals, needs and emotions. A woman sees the home as an extension of her personality, while a man sees the office as an extension of his personality. Men strive to do all within their reach to improve the conditions in the work place, while women do their utmost to improve the atmosphere at home. There are of course exceptions.

Nevertheless, men are more attached to material things and intellectual concepts. They are generally more impersonal than the women whose natural instincts are built around feelings and the personal touch. Women communicate more than men because they feel. Their emotions are more sensitized than those of men.

These natural differences are compounded by the social realities. Some women stay at home while their husbands go to work in an office. At the end of the day, she wants to be taken out whereas he wants to come home and just rest. Again, she's been alone all day, probably with no one to talk to. He's been with people, talking business no doubt, but talking all the same. She wants someone to talk to. He's already tired of talking and wants to be left alone. This was the case with Brooks and Laura Watson. Laura, an editor says, "I knew he needed a retreat from the rigors of the day. But I needed someone too. Scrubbing floors, washing dishes, cooking dinner, running errands, making up beds and cleaning the bath tub are hard work also. And, unlike Brooks who worked with people all day, I

worked alone. I needed someone to talk to."

Some husbands just tolerate a conversation with their wives when they come back from the hustle and bustle of a grueling day. They talk, but in monosyllables. One husband resented the fact that his wife wanted to talk when he just wanted to be quiet. His wife did not know this. He tolerated her for 20 years, then one day allowed the dam to burst. "Look, dear, when I come home, I'm tired and really couldn't be interested in anything less than an all-out catastrophe. If you will give me half an hour to pull myself together and keep the kids out of my hair, I'll listen to you. Right now, I'm shot. I don't want to have to take an interest in your day, which is what I've done for twenty years, I want to listen with genuine interest, and I can if I may have just thirty minutes of uninterrupted peace" (Cecil G. Osborne, The Art of Understanding Your Mate, p. 56).

The wife was surprised and asked, "Do you mean to tell me you've just managed to endure all of my conversation for twenty years? Why didn't you tell me? I don't know whether you have been too polite and considerate, or too dumb to express your needs. If you need half an hour, or an hour to pull yourself together so you can play the husband/father role, great! I'm all for it. I'm glad you told me."

AVOID CRITICISMS

Some men have retreated into their shell because of the attitude of their wives.

One wife established a reputation as 'a one-woman grievance committee, always in session'. Her under-standing of communication was to make a complaint. The husband at first sympathetically listened. But later he developed clever ploys to avoid her when her complaints persisted.

Another wife was always critical of her husband and his inabilities. He could not bring himself to talk to her.

Knowing that men naturally have communication problems, it will be a double tragedy for a wife to compound the situation by lack of understanding or through caustic criticism.

HOW TO HELP YOUR HUSBAND COMMUNICATE

• Don’t greet him in the morning with a complaint.

• Don’t welcome him back from work with a barrage of family needs.

• Meet his need to rest first before you ask him to meet your need to talk.

• Don’t criticize him unduely.

• Begin your communication from the vantage point of the things that interest him. Talk about his work even if you don’t like to.

• Use jokes or humourous things that happened around the home or elsewhere to draw him out of his shell.

• Explore avenues for joint ventures. Joint venture partners are always forced to talk about their common projects.

Let your husband know your need to be talked to. Some wives do not make it plain. They complain and criticise without really letting their husband’s know their real needs. One husband said, “My wife sometimes shakes me awake and says, ‘Talk to me!’”

“Talk to you! What about?”

“Anything. Just talk to me.”

“But I have nothing to talk about.”

“What are you feeling?”

“Feeling? I feel tired, sleepy and a little hostile because you won’t let me alone.”

“Good. That is a feeling. Tell me some more. What are you really feeling?”

This woman let her husband know her need. She also got him to admit, through her persistence, that he was anxious over the possibility of losing his job (The Art of Understanding Your Mate p. 55).

Men do not like to express their emotions for fear of being termed weak. Help your husband to talk about his fears. Don’t give up. Keep prodding him to open up.

Your husband may not always talk to you. But he also cannot always refuse to listen to you. Take the lead in communicating your feelings and aspirations to him. Do it gently and lovingly when you can get his full attention. As you do this you will be teaching him a lesson in communication.

Some women sometimes complain about their husband’s inability to communicate. But they themselves often expect their husbands to read their minds. Men may not talk much, but they are masters in the art of non-verbal communication. Actions speak louder than words. Tell him the things you like,

so he can do them. For starters, how about these?

• I love flowers. Please buy me flowers.

• I want to be cuddled 30 minutes before actual love making.

• Tell me when you enjoy my food.

• Call me a beautiful name. If he doesn't have a name, give yourself one and put up a "change of name" advert in your room, just as you would in a newspaper. He may not be able to read your mind, but he can read a notice on the wall. For instance, "Call me Tendril".

Adequately communicate your need to your husband. Teach him. Prepare him. Help him to help you. The more you appreciate him, the more you'll be helping him to appreciate you. The more you talk to him, the more he'll learn to talk to you.

This result may not be realized immediately. Nevertheless, learn to encourage him if he chooses to communicate non-verbally. As Laura Watson argues, "Talking . . . is actually an elementary kind of communication. God seldom speaks in an audible voice, yet He communicates. The greater language is the language of the heart."

Learn to interpret and appreciate this language, if that's what your husband choses to "speak". "Communication experts say our words convey only about 20 percent of our meaning. More than 50 percent is conveyed by body language, and 85 percent by our attitude and spirit" (Making Your Husband Feel Loved p. 202).

Your husband may not tell you “Honey, I love you,” verbally. Yet the gift of a dress or a greeting card speaks a language of its own. Appreciate your husband and tell him you understand what he is trying to say.

Chapter Six

WHEN HE IS NOT ROMANTIC

A wife once drew her husband's attention to a missing link in their relationship. "Honey", she said, "We have a good marriage, but there's something missing. We've tried to better our relationship by studying and practically applying good ideas. But there is an area we have not covered."

"And what can be the missing link? What have we not covered?" her husband asked.

The wife paused for a while and simply said "romance". The man was surprised. "That can't be? We read that book a month ago. In fact we read the entire chapters."

The woman was shocked by her husband's response. She practically collapsed on the couch in hysterical laughter. The man thought his wife was talking about Paul's book to the Romans which they studied together a month ago. The amazing thing, however, was that when he realized what his wife was talking about, he simply said "Oh, is that all you're making a fuss about?" That closed the subject, and permanently so.

Most men know little or nothing about true romance. Some say that romance is for newlyweds. Others say it's un-African. Yet others think it is necessary, but only for women.

True, women are more romantic than men because of their tendency to be personal, and emotional. Nevertheless, a wife cannot give herself to romance.

Romance is something you share with a husband or a wife.

But how can a wife get an unromantic husband to put a little tender touch in their marriage?

GIVE WHAT YOU DESIRE TO GET

Men are like rough diamonds. They don't look attractive or romantic externally. They appear rough and tough to smoothen. Yet inside there is a tenderness which only a good miner can discover, uncover and recover.

The process of refining a husband is like the process of polishing a rough diamond. As a diamond cannot be polished except through friction so a husband cannot be refined except through creative friction.

Initially, asking your husband to give you a welcome kiss may seem to him like a childish game. Asking him to call you special names may seem foolish. Yet you must not give up. A rough diamond cannot refine itself. It will need a smith to smoothen it through friction. Friction may come in the form of his resisting all the moves you make to get him to be tender.

The best thing to do is to give him what you desire to get from him.

• Call him beautiful names. Sarah called Abraham "Lord" (1 Peter 3: 6).

• Give him a kiss when he walks through the door after work. Kiss your husband

“lest he be angry” (Psalm 2:12).

• Set up candle light dinners for him.

• Appreciate him by hugging him for little favours he does for you.

• Tuck in love letters and notes, in his brief case, shoes and stockings, before he leaves for a trip.

• Remember his birthdays and make them special celebrations. Please keep the celebrations “holy”.

• Don’t wait for him to remember your wedding anniversary before you celebrate. Plan something and rope him in.

• Don’t resent him if he forgets your birthday or wedding anniversary.

• Plan picnics or dinner dates and persuade him to come. Rebekah and Isaac had picnics. It is likely that Rebekah organized them.

• Send him cards expressing your love.

• Don’t despair if he does not respond immediately. Persist! Persevere!

Remember that the best way to receive is to give. God says, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” He that gives sparingly receives sparingly. He that gives bountifully receives bountifully. “There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty” (Proverbs 11:24).

Why not begin to romance your rough diamond instead of just grumbling and complaining. It takes somebody to polish a diamond. There is no readymade husband anywhere. You have to prayerfully and patiently mold him into the man of your dream.

Emma Moody had to work hard before she could polish Dwight Moody, the famous 19th Century evangelist. He was not just uncouth; he had brash village-boy attributes.

The author of the song “Amazing Grace” was a former slave trader whose language was “pepped with swearing”. His wife worked hard enough to turn him into a perfect gentleman. He became more romantic and fulfilled in marriage and ministry. William Wilberforce, who became an anti-slavery crusader, was one of his converts. It all happened because a woman cared enough to dare the impossible.

YOU CAN CHANGE YOUR HUSBAND

Gary Smalley in the Joy of Committed Love, outlines the qualities a wife must have in order to change her husband:

• Courage: The inner commitment to pursue a worthwhile goal without giving up hope.

• Persistence: Continuing to pursue a goal until it is achieved.

• Gratefulness: A sincere appreciation for the benefits received from others.

• Calmness: An inner peace that allows you to respond quietly to a stressful situation without fear.

• Gentleness: Showing tender consideration for the feelings of another.

• Genuine love: Meeting the needs of another, prior to your own personal needs.

Do you have these qualities? If you do, fine! You are on the right track. But if you don't, then cry to God to help you. One rough diamond cannot polish another rough diamond. Two negative elements do not produce light. Your husband will become romantic if you are romantic. The positive element in you will charge the negative in him to bring forth light. Somebody has to pay the price-and you are uniquely positioned to do so. Someone has to be a "fool" for a marriage to be full of love.

The person who polishes a rough diamond and makes it to glow has the privilege of wearing it first. Yet he or she may decide not to bother, thereby losing the inner beauty covered with the rough edge.

The choice is yours! You can begin today to smoothen the rough edge in your husband. This will require hard work. It may take time. You may even be called a fool by relatives and friends. But remember, "he that plays the fool reaps the full blessing".

Chapter Seven

WHEN HE IS NOT SEXUALLY RESPONSIVE

A Woman once complained that her husband has a “fast food mentality” when it came to sex. According to him, sexual intercourse can be completed and enjoyed in five seconds. His philosophy was “wham, bang and it’s all over”.

This man’s wife suffered for many years because of his ignorance and selfishness. She was never sexually fulfilled because of his “fast food mentality”. Yet even the fastest food cannot be bought, cooked and eaten in five seconds.

Not many men appreciate the fact that though they have a right to their wives’ body, they need to respect the woman’s concept of love making. Sexually, men are easily excited by the physical appearance of a woman. They can get an orgasm merely seeing a naked woman. But the woman is not easily moved by the sight of a naked man. This explains why men prefer the lights to be on during love-making while the women prefer it off.

A woman is sexually attracted and activated by a man’s personality, his voice and his touch. A man can wake up in the middle of the night and immediately be in the mood for intercourse. The woman on the contrary will need to be prepared throughout the day. Romantic words and kind gestures are the things that put her in the right frame of mind to make love to her husband. A wife regards her husband as sexually cold if he does not adequately prepare her in this manner. The same is true if he has the problem of pre-mature ejaculation.

Some men can be done with love making in five seconds. They roll over and face the wall while their wives have barely started. This has led many women to resent their husbands. Some have given up any possibility of enjoying sex in

marriage. Most are too shy to tell their husbands how they feel. While a good percentage has yielded to satanic influences in adultery.

Yet these are not the proper ways of responding to the situation. The trouble is that many Christians have been taught that sex is a “necessary evil”. It is not meant to be enjoyed. Yet the Bible says: “Drink waters out of thine own cistern . . . Let her breasts satisfy thee at all times; and be thou ravished always with her love” (Proverbs 5:15, 18).

Few husbands and wives can sit down to discuss their sexual problems let alone take the unthinkable step of seeing a counselor.

But how do you overcome the problem of a sexually cold husband?

Honesty is the best policy. Tell your husband your need for sexual fulfillment without being critical of him. Communicate what it would take to give you fulfillment.

• Adequate preparation, a good bath for-instance.

• Romantic words with kind gestures all through the day.

• Physical touch through embracing and kissing.

• A patient and un-hurried time of petting or love play.

• Praise and poetic words during actual intercourse.

• Finger contact with the clitoris, one of the most sensitive parts of the woman’s sexual organ.

• A cool and calm environment without undue interruption.

• Pray with him over any sexual problem he may have. Encourage him to see a doctor over the problem of pre-mature ejaculation or any other problem.

• Buy him good Christian literature dealing with sexual fulfilment in marriage.

• Encourage him to practice various positions in love making with you. Intercourse has become dull for some couples because they only use one position —male on top.

• Guide him to do what gives you pleasure during intercourse. For instance, take his hand and put it on the part of your body where you desire his touch.

You may be embarrassed initially to do all these things, since it's not traditionally accepted for a woman to initiate sex. But don't worry. This kind of embarrassment is better than yielding to the temptation to defile your marriage through impure thoughts or outright adultery.

INFERTILITY AND IMPOTENCE

It was formally thought that a woman was always responsible whenever there were no children in a marriage. Today, we know that more men are infertile than women. The problem of low sperm count is prevalent among men.

Some wives have quietly gone outside their marriage, gotten pregnant only to pretend that their husbands are responsible. Some have yielded to the satanic suggestions of their husbands to have sexual intercourse with their relatives for the purpose of conception. This is deceit. It is adultery.

But what can a wife do if her husband is infertile?

• Go to the doctor and find out the degree of infertility.

• Pray and trust God for a miracle. Many people have received such miracles.

• Adopt a child through the welfare office or the Children's Homes. God will honour you if you take care of another person's biological child.

• Don't be bitter or resentful towards your husband. Continue to love and respect him.

For women who are married to men who became impotent after marriage, the following suggestions might be helpful:

• Never agree to a suggestion to have children through another source.

• Believe God for a miracle for your husband. Pray about it.

• Consider the option of adopting babies.

• Teach your husband to use his hands to give you sexual fulfilment. He will do it if he loves you, though he will have no sexual arousal in the process.

• Never see divorce as an option. The Bible says "What God has joined together let no man put assunder."

• Continue to love, cherish and honour your husband. This will give him encouragement to believe God for a miracle. It will also create the right atmosphere for the miracle to occur.

Sex was created by God to give a couple pleasure. There is no reason why you should not derive pleasure from your spouse, if both of you work at it. God will certainly help you if you completely depend on him. Cast your cares on him in every area of your marriage. He cares for you.

Chapter Eight

WHEN THE FOUNDATION IS FAULTY

Several marriages fail because of difficulties in interpersonal relationships. Sometimes, a man is stingy, does not communicate or is unromantic. In other instances he exhibits behaviour which defies logic, causing pain to his wife. Behind these visible problems may lie invisible and sinister forces.

The counsel advocated in previous chapters may not work, even when diligently applied, if a marriage is built upon an evil foundation. It may only work temporarily, having a semblance of peace and harmony but over time, the cracks begin to appear. And if nothing is done to rectify the situation, the result could be very chaotic or disastrous.

Indeed more marriages have been destroyed by evil foundations than by mere character flaws which many wives point to in a husband. Evil foundations re-enforce the danger of character flaws and often lead to divorce. This is why to beat your husband; you must identify and deal with the evil foundations upon which your marriage is built. These foundations are not exclusive to your husband. You may find them in your own background if you have eyes sharp enough to look into the activities of previous generations in your family. So don't just go pointing accusing fingers at your husband and his family foundations. You must also examine the evil foundations in your own family and the corporate foundations established by you and your husband at the inception of your relationship in marriage.

David, the sweet Psalmist of Israel, asked a rhetorical question: "If the foundations be destroyed what can the righteous do?" (Psalm 11:3). Nothing can be done except to thoroughly examine, cleanse and rebuild the broken foundation in righteousness.

Foundations may be invisible but they determine the dynamics of visible structures built upon them, including human relationships. They may have been laid long before the marriage was contracted, but they determine the stability and durability of the marriage. A couple may know little or nothing about them, but their marriage and even the marriages of their children and children's children could be affected by these evil foundations. The word, "foundations" as used in this chapter refers to the things human beings do such as what they worship, to whom they pledge their allegiance, how they contract marriages and to what they commit the future preservation of their children, even to the third and fourth generations. Let us now look closely at some foundations.

A FOUNDATION OF DECEIT

In our book Your Honeymoon Can Last Forever we told the story of a woman who used a charm or love portion to get a man to marry her. She was a prostitute but at some point got fed up with this commercial sex trade. She longed to marry and settle down. But she was afraid that no one would marry her. She visited a shrine where the priest prepared a charm with which to hood-wink one of her cherished customers, who was still unmarried. The charm was prepared and administered on the customer who immediately came under a cover of darkness. He subsequently began to develop an un-natural "love" for the woman. He developed amnesia and seemed to have forgotten the commercial sex relationship upon which their initial contact was based. The woman also stopped charging him a fee whenever they had sex.

Not long after, the man proposed and they eventually got married. The relationship was sustained with the charm given to the woman by the satanic priest. The woman administered it in small doses in the man's meal. She also had to yearly re-enforce the sacrifice at designated locations.

The couple had children and lived together for many years, apparently without

any major problems. After some time, the woman felt that she was secure and that there was no more need to use the charm or to re-enforce its powers annually. This thinking however, became her undoing.

One day, after many years, the man woke up from his stupor and saw his wife in the room. He looked at her strangely and asked what she was doing in his house. The woman feigned surprise and reminded the man that she was his wife. “Impossible,” the man responded. “I don’t know you! You can’t be my wife? How can you be my wife? What I remember is that you are a prostitute. How then can you be my wife?”

The power of the charm had apparently worn off and the man had come back to his senses. At this point the woman fell on the ground wailing and weeping. The “tides of judgment had over flown her banks. It was time to reap what she had sown”.

It is interesting to note that if the children from the above marriage themselves, got married even if legitimately, their marriages will most likely be destabilized by invisible demonic hands unless the evil nature of their family foundation was dealt with, as we shall later suggest.

CONSTITUENTS OF AN EVIL FOUNDATION

• Idolatry : The belief in and worship of man-made gods or deities other than the God of the Bible (Deut. 27:15).

• Wickedness: The practice and perpetuation of injustice in human relationships causing suffering, misery and death (Deuteronomy 27:16-19). This includes bloodshed.

• Immorality: The involvement in sexual activity contrary to the scriptural boundary of morality and outside the legal confines of marriage (Deut.27:20-23).

Some people go to idol altars to seek for marriage partners, like the prostitute whose story is recounted in the preceding page. Sacrifices are made with satanic tokens used to manipulate and match two otherwise incompatible persons. When this happens, the partners usually end up as strange bed-fellows in marriage. Some men got married by using charmed objects such as “girls-follow-me” talisman and amulets.

Others entered into legitimate relationships based on genuine love for their wives. But their marriages were dedicated to deities without their knowledge under highly occultic traditional ceremonies where sacrifices were made to demons in the name of honouring and invoking the consent and blessings of dead ancestors. Unknown to “green-horn” couples who are only too eager to get over and done with the traditional marriage ceremonies, the parties were compelled to enter into blood covenants as libations were poured. Sooner or later these covenants begin to complicate their marriages.

There have been cases where a man and his wife-to-be were joined in marriage at the graveside of the woman’s late father. They were made to prostrate on the grave, pour libation and offer nuts to the dead with the living relations as witnesses. This is nothing less than the veneration of ancestral spirits and it is idolatry.

Some Christians have ignorantly agreed to these highly diabolical traditional marriage practices, thereby laying a faulty foundation for their marriages. Satan will turn round to destabilize your marriage if you or your husband did any of the following during your engagement or wedding ceremony:

• Visit to a native doctor or a satanic priest for assistance in marriage or business.

• Consultation of a palmist or an occultist to determine the suitability of each other for marriage

• Pouring of libation or eating and drinking from the cup of the dead. This amounts to ancestor worship.

• Tasting and drinking wine or liquids mingled with the blood of the couple to seal allegiance to one another or to the bridegroom's family. The explanation usually given is that this drastic action serves to preserve fidelity.

• Any form of sacrifice using chickens, rams, goats or any other animals or tokens.

• Pre-marital sex, pregnancy before marriage to prove the fertility of the man or woman.

• Pre-marital sex leading to abortion.

• Concealing of illegitimate children from a spouse.

• Concealing the fact that one has been previously married and divorced.

• Concealing of any previous or current membership or affiliation to occultic groups or secret societies.

• Concealing of previous cases of imprisonment.

• Concealing of hereditary sicknesses such as insanity in the family.

• Any other lie or false claim made to manipulate a potential spouse into accepting one's hand in marriage.

• Plain disobedience in marrying an unbeliever or adherent of another religion contrary to the injunctions of 2 Corinthians 6:14-15.

God does not contradict His word. There is no relationship between light and darkness, between a believer and a non-believer. Any marriage built upon a

faulty foundation will suffer undue stress and may eventually collapse, if the foundation is not rebuilt.

EVIL FOUNDATIONS FROM

PREVIOUS GENERATIONS

We are not only affected by what we do personally, but also by the actions of our fathers. Lamentations 5:7 says, “Our fathers sinned and are no more, but we bear their iniquities.” God warned Israel that their children will bear the consequences of worshipping other gods. “You shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate me” (Exodus 20:5).

The worship of idols is a spiritual marriage between the worshipper and the devil or his demons. This marriage affects every aspect of a marital relationship between a man and a woman. It also affects the marriage of their children where covenants and dedications have been made for families.

We cannot understand why Er and Onan, the sons of Judah, died prematurely unless we examine the sins of their father. Neither can we understand why their marriages failed unless we dig up their foundations. “Judah took a wife for his son Er, called Tamar. But Er, Judah’s first-born, was wicked in the sight of the Lord and the Lord killed him” (Genesis 38:7). Judah according to tradition asked Onan to marry Tamar, his late brother’s wife. He supposedly agreed but for selfish reasons. He wanted to have sexual pleasure with Tamar, but not the responsibility of bringing up a child that would ultimately bear the name of his brother, Er. Judah’s instruction to his son was “. . . go in to your brother’s wife and marry her, and raise up an heir to your brother”.

Onan knew that whatever child is born by Tamar “would not be his”, so “when he went in to his brother’s wife . . . he emitted on the ground, lest he should give an heir to his brother”. This offended God, “therefore He killed him also”. The question is why were the sons of Judah wicked? Why could they not sustain marital relationships? Why did God kill them?

These questions cannot be answered without reference to the actions of Judah. Notice that it was Judah who suggested that Joseph should be sold into slavery instead of being killed by his brothers. This sounded like a better and more humane treatment for Joseph. But it was no less crafty or wicked. In fact when Judah said to his brothers “What profit is there if we kill our brother and conceal his blood?” he was not being humane but mercantile. He was more concerned about wasting Joseph’s monetary value by killing him. He wanted profit; this is why he was more inclined to sell Joseph for gain.

Judah made a powerful and seemingly humane argument why Joseph should not be killed, but his motive was dictated by the spirit of profiteering. “What profit is there to kill our brother? Come and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him, for he is our brother and our flesh” (Gen. 37:26-27).

Judah knew that slaves were treated with levity. They could be resold or killed at any time. Judah knew that the Midianite traders, to whom Joseph was sold, were wicked and cruel taskmasters. As far as he was concerned, it was okay if Joseph died at the hand of the Midianites. This would exonerate him and his brothers from blood-guiltiness. Judah was cruel, crafty and calculating. He did not have the heart of human kindness. He lacked mercy.

Joseph was pleading and crying for mercy. But Judah and his brothers refused to heed to the travail of his soul. The wicked foundation they laid began to affect them almost immediately.

The first thing we notice in Judah's life was that he left the company of his brothers after Joseph was sold. He went to visit Hirah an Adullamite. While there he came under the cover of darkness in the place and forgot the injunction that he ought not to marry a non Israelite. "And Judah saw there a daughter of a certain Canaanite whose name was Shua and he married her and went in to her" (Gen. 38:2). The marriage seemed fruitful at first. Judah's wife bore three sons, Er, Onan and Shelah. But no sooner, the law of sin and death came into operation because of Judah's wicked actions against Joseph. Er died because he was wicked. Onan also died because he was no less wicked.

Judah did not repent when these processions of deaths visited his family. He became more crafty. He refused Tamar to marry his third son for fear that he too will die. He asked her to go back to her father's house, which amounted to separating a woman from her legitimate family. One day Judah went to Timnah to shear sheep, and Tamar, pretended to be a prostitute.

Meanwhile Judah's wife had died and he must have been under considerable sexual pressure. He was thereby compelled to solicit her, thinking she was a commercial sex worker. Tamar was bitter because of the way she had been treated. She yielded to her father-in-law's advances and eventually became pregnant by him.

EVIL FOUNDATIONS FROM JUDAH

TO DAVID AND SOLOMON

Wickedness matured into immorality and a stronghold of incest was established in the family. It was this stronghold that affected subsequent generations of people from the tribe of Judah and made it difficult for them to maintain purity

in marital relationships. First, the sin of Judah with Tamar created a vacuum in the kingship of Israel. Judah was supposed to produce the kings, but because of the sin of incest, this family could not produce kings for ten generations. The law states that a bastard shall not enter into the congregation of the righteous until ten generations.

Interestingly, David was coronated king because genealogically he was the tenth generation from Judah. Before him Saul, from the tribe of Benjamin, was coronated because no person from the tribe of Judah was qualified. Unfortunately, even when David ascended the throne after ten generations, the foundations of Judah's sin was still not dealt with through repentance and breaking of curses. No wonder, the very sin that pulled down Judah affected David, even after ten generations.

At a time when kings went to war, David stayed home and from the roof he saw a woman bathing and the woman was very beautiful to behold… Then David sent messengers, and took her; and she came to him, and he lay with her, for she was cleansed from her impurity and she returned to her husband. And the woman conceived; and so sent and told David, 'I am with child' (Read 2 Samuel 11:1-2, 4-5).

When Bathsheba the wife of Uriah the Hittite was pregnant, David arranged to kill her husband and conceal the sin. The interesting thing here is not what David did but the fact that the sin David was supposedly contending with was no different from the sin that confronted his fore father, Judah. Notice that David sent Joab to war against the Ammonites. Remember that the Ammonites were the product of the incestuous relationship between Lot and one of his daughters (Gen.19:30-38). So the very sin of incest that pulled Judah down from his exalted throne as king was what compelled David to laze around in Jerusalem at a time when kings should be at war in the field. Thus while Joab was defeating the Ammonites in the field, this incestuous spirit, a stronghold amongst the Ammonites, lured David into an immoral relationship with another man's wife. It also led him to commit murder, for David killed Uriah the Hittite.

This same foundation was still affecting this family by the time of Solomon, the son of David by Bathsheba. He made a treaty with Pharaoh king of Egypt and married Pharoah's daughter. He married 700 wives and kept 300 concubines, who 'turned his heart after other gods; and his heart was not loyal to the Lord his God, as was the heart of his father David'. (Read 1 Kings 11:4-8).

It is equally instructive to note that Amnon, David's son committed rape and incest with his half-sister Tamar. And Absalom, besides rebelling against his father David "went into his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel" (2 Samuel 13:21-22).

DESTROYING AN EVIL FOUNDATION

Realize that marriage can never work on the foundation of idolatry, wickedness and immorality. Neither can it work on the foundation of any other falsehood or lie. On the contrary, it will collapse, faster than one can ever imagine, like a house made of cards. Consequently, you must consciously do the following:

Re-evaluate the generational foundation upon which your family is built. This will demand strenuous efforts in investigating into:

• Any traces of idolatry;

• Perceived cases of wickedness either through land or property grabbing, bloodshed, slavery, false accusation, oppression of widows, orphans, strangers, poor or disabled people who cannot defend themselves.

• Discovery of any cases of immorality including fornication, adultery or incest.

• Do a thorough work on your genealogy. Begin spiritual mapping. Examine the roots of your primary family and that of your spouse, including the extended family or the kindred.

Ask God questions; tell Him to reveal those things which men may not say. I say this because most families have carefully covered up their shameful past or roots for fear of being laughed at or scorned. This is clearly dangerous and foolhardy. If you are in this situation, then you are playing with fire. And you know it will burn sooner or later.

• Bring quality repentance over every generational sin you notice. Do it line upon line, precept upon precept. Be diligent and thorough. Don't gloss over anything. Do it together with your spouse if he/she is born again.

• Bring repentance for the things you or your spouse did to reinforce these generational sins. Mention them point by point. Realize how badly grieved God is by your action and genuinely show godly sorrow.

• Make restitution to your spouse for any lie or falsehood you perpetrated before or after the marriage.

• Have you dedicated yourselves through ungodly religious ceremonies or in joining secret societies? Renounce and revoke all the covenants (agreements) and dedications entered into knowingly or unknowingly before and after your marriage.

• Destroy the evil altars upon which such covenants and dedications were made. This requires burning the tokens which are the symbols of the agreements, as was done in Acts 19:18-20. Altars are places where you contact evil spirits and from where you receive information from them.

• Renounce the use of witchcraft which operates by the spirit of manipulation, domination and control in your marriage.

• Break the curses that seek to destroy your marriage.

• Serve a quit notice to the spirits to which your marriage was covenanted.

• Renounce the tokens, litigation and sanctions that had to do with the old covenant or altars. Tokens are physical things you keep, such as rings, lucky charms etc. as symbols of the covenant you have made with demons. Litigations and sanctions speak of the punishment which demons mete upon you if you disobey the covenant. In most cases these are a form of illness, bareness or various forms of curses.

• Build a new altar in righteousness and consecrate your marriage as well as future generations of your offspring on this altar. This altar should become a place of consistent prayer where you re-dedicate your family to God.

• Enter into a fresh marriage covenant sealed with the blood of Jesus. This can be done in a living church through the help of a pastor who has a good and verified testimony in his marriage. Such a marriage blessing will open the heavens for your family. It will mark a new and blessed beginning for you.

• Rededicate the children, and everything pertaining to your marriage back to God. That action serves as a seal to mark them out anywhere as God's own vessels.

• Make a vow never to rebuild the evil foundations you have destroyed.

Note: Renouncing is a form of prayer which we give up, or surrender certain beliefs & practices.

Everything stated above must be done with the word of God and by the leading of the Holy Spirit. But it must begin with genuine repentance. There are three levels of repentance which are all indispensable in destroying evil foundations. These are:-

• Personal Repentance: This involves the acknowledgement, confession and forsaking of sins committed by an individual.

• Corporate Repentance: At this level, the confession of sins must be done by a group, whether the sin is committed by an individual or by the group. No one should feel it does not concern him/her directly.

• Identificational Repentance: This refers to the confession of sins committed by others both in the past and present-sins which affect those who did not directly commit them. This is a clear mandate for all intercessors as Nehemiah 1:1-4 shows.

Leviticus 26:40-42 states:

If they shall confess their iniquity, and the iniquity of their fathers, with their trespass which they trespassed against me, and that also they have walked contrary unto me; And that I also have walked contrary unto them, and have brought them into the land of their enemies; if then their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they then accept the punishment of their iniquity; Then will I remember my covenant with Jacob, and also my covenant with Isaac and also my covenant with Abraham will I remember; and I will remember their land.

A similar sentiment is expressed in the book of 2 Chronicles 7:14: “If the people who are called by my name shall humble themselves and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then I will hear from heaven and forgive their sin, and heal their land.”

Chapter Nine

WHEN HE WANTS A DIVORCE

Divorce is the natural consequence of not building a marriage on the foundation of obedience to the word of God. It is the product of unfaithfulness, lack of communication and the ultimate manifestation of the little foxes that attack the foundations of marriages.

If you diligently work towards applying the sound counsel proffered in this book, I assure you that with God's help, there will be no need for your husband to seek a divorce.

However, suppose your husband wants a divorce, what would you do? How do you respond to a husband who says he is tired of you? The mere mention of divorce by a husband has shattered the lives, confidence and happiness of many wives. It is therefore important to deal with this all important question. To this end, I would like to share with you very practical experiences of other people in the hope that you would gain enough wisdom to avoid the pitfalls.

TINA'S ORDEAL WITH DIVORCE

Tina married Peter with the hope of living happily ever after. Everything seemed okay until Peter was promoted in his job as a Sales Executive. He began to come back home late. He skipped meal times with his family and became increasingly absent but inexplicably touchy, especially when Tina confronted him about his coming home late and unhealthy practice of sleeping outside their matrimonial home without explanations.

At first, Peter justified his lateness in coming home from work and explained it off as the price he had to pay to be promoted. But as time went on Tina began to hear stories indicating that Peter was seeing another woman. Although there was no concrete proof, she knew that it was time to confront him directly especially judging from Peter's new attitude towards her. He had suddenly become indifferent to her needs, behaving as though she did not even exist. He rarely talked to her or appreciated her. He was always silent, unless he needed to give an important instruction.

Therefore it did not come as a surprise to Tina when Peter one day told her he wanted a divorce. Asked why, he said it was because he no longer loved her and besides, he had concluded plans to marry another woman. After saying this, he stormed out of the house, leaving Tina alone to take in the impact of his bombshell. Although Tina was not too surprised about Peter's decision, she was so devastated and confused that she became dumbfounded. Much as she wanted to scream and tell him how unfair he was, she could not even speak. She just kept quiet.

Four days after that incident, Peter wanted Tina to leave the house but she refused to do so because of their two sons. He threatened to throw her things out if she did not leave within seven days. When Tina remained adamant, Peter brought the other woman into the house. A duplex which had been a relatively peaceful and happy home for over a decade turned chaotic. He kept the new woman in one section of the house and virtually moved all his belongings there. This was too much for Tina and her children to bear. She therefore promptly arranged for a truck, packed her things and left with her children.

So many women in Africa have been driven away from their legitimate homes just as Tina was by other women brought in by their husbands. Some of these women have been so timid that they have just folded their hands, doing nothing. Others have been so verbally and physically battered that they have lost the will to "fight" for their marriage. One husband brought another woman into the house. Even though he did not ask his wife to leave, she could not bear the

thought of sharing her husband with another woman. She unwillingly packed out of the house, leaving her five children. As heart breaking as this sounds, I want to let you know that as a child of God you are not powerless and you are not alone. What do I mean? First realize that:

THE OTHER WOMAN IS A

"STRANGE" WOMAN

Every legally married woman must realize that any other woman claiming to be in love with her husband is a strange woman. Such women have no right to invade your home whether spiritually or otherwise. On no ground should a legitimate wife move out of her home because of a strange woman, especially when the husband has not asked her to leave. Even when your husband tells you to leave, it would be unwise to just pack your things and leave. The only ground on which you should temporarily relocate from the house is when he becomes physically abusive or violent. (We shall revisit this issue later). Suffice it to say that a legally married woman must never abandon her home for a strange woman. Sometimes the strange woman is only testing the waters to see how far she can go in trying to brow beat the legitimate wife into submission. When this happens stand your ground and refuse to blink.

Some people are too quick to accept divorce. An understanding of the Biblical view of divorce is, however, indispensable in dealing with your husband when he wants a divorce. It is also necessary to know what to do when a husband's actions are calculated towards pushing the wife to seek a divorce. These actions include: verbal and physical abuse, intimidation, threats, denial of intimacies and failure to provide support, especially regarding the welfare of the children.

BIBLICAL VIEW ON DIVORCE

This may come as a shock to many people, but God never intended to have men marrying and divorcing their wives for flimsy excuses as we find today. In fact, couples must realize that God actually frowns at divorce. Therefore, the first thing we must note is that God hates divorce. Malachi 2:16 says; “For the Lord God of Israel says that He hates divorce, for it covers one’s garment with violence, says the Lord of hosts. Therefore take heed to your spirit that you do not deal treacherously.”

What God hates must be bad. Many people fail to understand that God intended marriage to last until death. When the Pharisees and the Sadducees who represented the religious establishment in Jesus’ day queried Jesus on why Moses permitted husbands to give their wives a bill of divorcement, he argued that Moses did so because of the “hardness of men’s hearts”. Jesus concluded by saying that from the beginning divorce was not permitted. “Therefore, what God has joined together, let not man put asunder.”

Divorce was permitted in the Bible strictly on grounds of adultery and impurity flowing from idol worship. In Matthew 5:32 Jesus stated this categorically: “. . . Whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery.”

Many husbands have divorced their wives on grounds other than adultery. Very flimsy excuses such as looks, character flaws and inability to perform in bed have been offered to explain divorces. Here I have a word for the women: the mere fact that your husband claims he is no longer in love with you, is not enough grounds for divorce.

The other ground on which God permitted divorce in Israel was because certain Jewish men, including priests, had married women from foreign nations. These

women engaged in idol worship and caused their husbands to forsake the worship of the true God. This problem affected even the kings of Israel such as Solomon, and Ahab among others. The book of Ezra records this concerning some Jews who became convicted for entering into these marriages:

"And among the sons of the Priests who had taken pagan wives, the following were found of the sons of Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and the brothers; Maaseiah, Eliezer, Jarib and Gedaliah. And they gave their promises that they would put away their wives; and being guilty, they presented a ram of the flock as their trespass offering" (Ezra 10:18-19).

The Apostle Paul also taught that where a woman gives her life to Christ and the husband objects to her being saved and wants to leave her, she is not bound to tag along with him.

"But to this rest I, not the Lord, say: if any brother has a wife who does not believe, and she is willing to live with him, let him not divorce her. And a woman who has a husband, who does not believe, if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife . . . otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy. But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases. But God has called us to peace" (1 Corinthians 7:12-15).

Many people have used Paul's personal view expressed above as licence to justify divorce and remarriage. First, they suggest that when the unbeliever decides to leave his believing spouse, the believer is not under bondage to remain unmarried. She could remarry. But Paul meant no such thing, because he was fully aware of what Jesus said in Matthew 5:32 ". . . that whosoever divorces his wife for any reason except for sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced (even because of immorality) commits adultery."

Further, Paul expressly stated in the scripture cited above that what he was suggesting was his own personal opinion and not the Lord's. In contrast, he began laying down the principles of divorce in 1 Corinthians 7:10-11 by stating: "Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Lord: A wife is not to depart from her husband. But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. And a husband is not to divorce his wife."

It was from this point that he entered into his argument in verses 12 and 15 which begin with: "But to the rest I, not the Lord, say . . . if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases. But God has called us to peace."

We must not confuse what Paul said with what the Lord said, especially when Paul himself clearly stated the difference. God says a husband should not divorce his wife, but if he does he must remain unmarried. Likewise a wife is not to divorce her husband, but if she does, she must remain unmarried. This is the standpoint of scripture even where divorce is instituted by a particular party because of immorality or because of the salvation of a spouse. He who marries a divorced person for whatever reason commits adultery. I know that sounds hard and very outdated but that is scripture, which unfortunately cannot be changed or interpreted to suit our circumstances.

While God understands the pain many women are passing through in marriage, the physical and mental abuse, the desertion and the lack of security, He also makes it abundantly clear that He hates divorce. It is this divine hatred for divorce that explains the difficulty God places on the path of those who want a divorce. His aim is not to make you suffer forever in your affliction, but to show you a much better way of escape than divorce. I believe the Lord is happier to see, even estranged couples reconcile and re-unite rather than when they go their separate ways. But if it is not possible to re-unite, then God will give you sufficient grace to live alone.

THE EASE WITH WHICH PEOPLE GET

MARRIED AND DIVORCED

It is so easy to get a divorce today, that people can be legally separated six months after being joined in marriage.

One of the tabloids in Ghana reported the case of a man, Harold Gult, 40, who got married to three generations of ladies from the same family. He first married Anna Nowland, then her daughter Michelle and then Michelle's grandmother, Maria Nowland. This story is told in greater detail in How to Beat your Wife by the same author.

The truth is that marriage has been cheapened by the ease with which anybody can get a divorce for the flimsiest reason. For Harold Gult to have been able to marry three relations within six years, shows that something grave is wrong with mankind. It's shameful, not just because it is revolting for one man to have sex with a mother, grandmother and grandchild, but because it runs against the grain of Bible teaching which forbid any man from uncovering the nakedness of both a mother and a daughter. Quite apart from the demands of decency, this kind of easy arrangement just goes to show how deluded our so called enlightened society has become. At least the Christian mind is repelled by this shameful kind of behaviour.

Thanks be to God, that these kinds of occurrences are still the exception, rather than the norm. Although our society is generally becoming more permissive, we are encouraged to know that the remnant Church still upholds the moral standards set down by scriptures. All harassed and battered women who desire to see God's intervention in their marriages and homes must seek to uphold God's

standards for resolving conflicts in their relationships.

PRACTICAL STEPS TO TAKE WHEN YOUR HUSBAND WANTS A DIVORCE

• Don’t panic or throw your hands in the air as if nothing can be done. Something can be done and there’s always a silver lining on the dark clouds threatening to mar your happiness.

• Quietly find out why he wants a divorce.

• Avoid any verbal or physical contention when trying to find out why he wants a divorce.

• Do an honest self-examination. Identify aspects of your character or attitude that may have motivated his action. The Bible says, “Judge yourself and you will not need to be judged”.

• Determine to change your character or attitude. Work hard at it. I must confess, this is very unpleasant but at the end of the day you’ll reap a rich reward.

• Re-examine your foundations according to the standard set out in the counsel in chapter seven. Bring repentance whenever you notice idolatry, immorality or any form of wickedness.

• Fight for your marriage. This can best be done on your knees through intense prayers of intercession, supplication and well-focused spiritual warfare. At this level you are dealing with the ruling spirits controlling men’s actions.

• Suggest to him the need for counseling. Promise to do whatever it will take to make him reconsider his decision.

• Get your pastor or other trusted and respected Christian leaders to try and convince your husband to change his mind.

• Never yield to the temptation of wanting a divorce yourself. Two wrongs don't make a right. There is a tendency to say, "well, if he wants a divorce, so do I. Who the hell does he think he is, treating me like scum?" That won't do at all.

• Where you have done all the above and your husband still insists on divorce, get your lawyer to advice you on the next line of action. Talking to a lawyer will help you distill the critical issues involved in a divorce, such as:

• Provision for the welfare of the children.

• Your own safety, if you are being intimidated or threatened.

• Alimony.

• Care and custody of the children.

Where he wants a divorce because of your inability to have a child, cry out to God to intervene in the way Hannah did (1 Sam.1 & 2). God is faithful and will not forsake you.

A man had concluded plans to divorce his wife because he thought she was barren. He actually sent her away, notwithstanding her pleas and the counsel of friends. Two months later it was discovered that the wife was already pregnant by him, when he sent her away. Seven months later she gave birth to a physical replica of the man, who was compelled to take back his misjudged and mistreated wife. Even if you think that the babies are taking too long in coming, you could discuss with your husband plans to adopt and care for a child.

There is the case of a woman whose husband divorced her and in anger she killed her two children in a hotel room, just to spite the husband. Don't do anything to jeopardize the possibility of reconciliation. There is no need for name calling or invocation of curses.

Some men have divorced their wives only to take them back after being separated for many years. I know a couple who were separated for over 17 years and are reunited today. The woman originally opposed the separation and believed that one day her husband would return to her. In course of time he did, because she did not lose faith in God and His ability to restore her marriage.

Don't rush to remarry if your husband refuses to reconsider his decision to get a divorce. Apart from the fact that remarriage under this condition is scripturally wrong; it will hinder any hope of reconciliation. Remarriage is only Biblically accepted after the death of a spouse. This does not refer to death caused by foul means. I would like to sound a note of warning to many women here. Never should you consider entering into another relationship soon after a separation or a divorce. Why? Because you are still hurting and any man can take you for granted. You will discover that the affection isn't deep or that you entered into this new relationship on the rebound.

Don't be too quick to revert to your maiden name. This would mean denying your identity of marriage and by implication accepting the divorce. Rest in the Lord no matter what happens. When you have done all you can do, leave the rest to God. He says, "Cast your cares upon me and I will care for you". I understand the pain that comes to a woman, especially in Africa, when she's done everything in her power to prevent a divorce yet it still happens. Brace up-all is not lost. There's still something to live for.

SPIRIT SPOUSES AND DIVORCE

One of the foundational causes of divorce can be linked to the operation of spirit beings in the marriages of some humans. A spiritual door is opened into an individual's life whenever his or her ancestors were involved in idolatry, immorality or wickedness. This is how people contact spirit spouses. Evidence of the operation of these spirit spouses (also referred to as water spirits because

they reside in water) can be seen in persistent cases of eating, playing or having sexual intercourse with strange partners in dreams. They also manifest in the experience of having miscarriages, barrenness and unnecessary contention or strife between a husband and his wife.

If you notice these things in your marriage, confess your sins and the sins of your fathers according to Leviticus 26:40-43. Go to a man of God who understands what deliverance is all about, and prayerfully cut off all links with those spirits by closing the doorways through which they come in to interfere in your life. You could also pray for yourself. But be sure to diligently apply the counsel advocated in the chapter dealing with foundations.

Divorce has been averted in marriages of so many women who had the problem of a spirit husband, a very common phenomenon in most river-rine communities. We have for example the case of Nkechi who was always at loggerhead with her husband. They never agreed on anything. This situation persisted for many years. But one day the husband was fed up and asked her to leave. They had problems alright but Nkechi never thought it could lead to divorce. Devastated, she ran to us. We investigated her background and discovered that both Nkechi and her husband's parents were priests of a water deity. In fact, people consulted them for spiritual problems. Besides, Nkechi told a story of how a strange man from the river constantly appeared in her dreams claiming to be her husband. He would sometimes compel her to have sexual intercourse in the dream. An experience she felt physically. Nkechi's husband also had sexual intercourse regularly in his dreams. Clearly, they both were yoked one way or the other with marine spirits.

First, we got Nkechi to repent over the worship of water spirits by her ancestors. She also brought repentance on behalf of her husband. When deliverance prayers were offered for her, it was discovered that the spirit husband defiling Nkechi and claiming to be married to her was actually lodged inside her. It was evicted through the application of the word of God and the authority of the blood of Jesus. This enabled Nkechi to deal with this contentious spirit. After this, she

became more conciliatory, avoiding any arguments with her husband, who immediately noticed the change in her temperament and disposition. Intrigued, he set out to discover how his previously contentious wife had become so sober. After watching her changed behaviour for months, he wanted to find out the secret behind her transformation. Nkechi shared her experiences with her husband who also agreed to come for deliverance prayer. This was how this family was spared the pain and devastation of divorce.

Chapter Ten

WIVES WHO “BEAT” THEIR HUSBANDS

Some husbands are so difficult to please that it would seem humanly impossible to deal with them. Many such husbands have been famous men who excelled in their chosen professions. In their time they shone brilliantly like stars on the horizon. They were the toast of everybody outside their homes, yet only their wives knew the difficulty of getting them to do even such basic things as brushing their teeth, taking a bath or dressing decently. As unthinkable as it may sound, some great men’s wives have suffered years of neglect, abuse and pain.

Some of these wives, like their husbands, were famous in their own right. Others became famous because of the dynamic changes they made in their husbands. These women helped in very substantial ways to transform their husbands and helped them to fulfil God’s purpose. The husbands probably may not have been famous without their wives. Unfortunately most of these wives were never recognized or openly appreciated in their life time.

As we meet with these women in this concluding chapter, let us learn from the things they did to make great men out of what one writer has described as “country bumpkins”.

KATIE LUTHER

MANAGER PER EXCELLENCE

Everybody knows about the famous and irrepressible Martin Luther, the rebel who engineered the Reformation throughout Europe and beyond. But few remember that he had a wife-a good one for that matter. Katie, a former nun, and

a very intelligent and hardworking woman, is described by biographers as having had a “quick tongue”, but this was used to better the lot of her husband.

Luther was a monk who broke his chastity vow and married. But he failed to realize that marriage was a different ball game altogether which demanded adjustment. Although he loved his wife, he remained a recluse, living a secluded life of constant study and prayer. Of course, you could not readily blame him, having lived like that for more than forty years. Katie was understanding enough to accommodate this studious disposition of her husband, yet tough enough to set the limits. Left alone, Martin Luther could remain in his study for a whole week without thinking of taking a bath or eating food.

William J. Peterson, author of Husbands and Wives, a classic, detailing the private lives of famous ministers and their wives writes that Martin Luther “once locked himself in his study for three days until Katie had the door removed from the hinges. Innocently, Martin asked as he saw Katie standing in the doorless doorway, ‘why did you do that? I wasn’t doing any harm’” (p. 101).

Martin Luther probably gave no thought to anybody worrying about him but he certainly did not understand how a wife-even an ex nun would feel being locked out for three good days. Many husbands like Martin Luther are so naive that they do not know when they are doing great harm, both to themselves and their families. This is common among gospel ministers, brilliant academics, ambitious professionals who aim for high honours in their chosen fields.

Some forget that marriage was made for companionship and that they must not only endeavour to do their work well but also be available to their wives. We are not in the least suggesting here that you adopt Katie Luther’s door-breaking tactics to handle such husbands. Nevertheless, the wives of absentee husbands must be tender enough to be accommodating and tough enough to act with dispatch when necessary.

Martin Luther was generous to a fault. He “never learnt how to handle money”. He gave out money to anyone who had need of it any time he had some cash on him. And there are so many people like him. Luther once said that, “God divided, the hand into fingers so that money would slip through”. But for his wife, the family house which was always full of students and visitors, would have suffered greatly. The good man had no time to worry about the nitty-gritty of the day-to-day running of a home.

Katie was a great manager of the household and its resources. Although she was sometimes too merchantile in approach, for a minister’s wife, she prudently stipulated strict fiscal discipline which enabled the family to survive. She compelled the students who stayed at their place to pay for boarding and food. This was great moderation to Luther’s “unbounded liberality and hospitality”. People may think Katie was being uncharitable but she knew where the shoe pinched in running such a large household.

While Martin Luther was always in the study, praying and waiting on the Lord for messages and revelations, she took full charge of keeping goats, cows, chickens and doing a lot of farming. Her pragmatic approach to life helped the Luthers to avoid financial strains. Consider this yourself: a tender, prayerful and soft-spoken nun turned farmer, house manager and personal assistant.

Another significant area Katie helped her husband was in bringing some order in his personal life. Before they got married in 1525, Martin Luther rarely took care of himself. For instance, he did not make his bed for one whole year, between June 1524 and June 1525, when he got married. He himself admitted that “no one had made my bed for a whole year. The straw was rotting from my sweat. I wore myself out with work during the day!” God providentially brought Katie unto Martin Luther’s life to help him sort out his personal life.

EMMA MOODY

POLISHER OF A ROUGH DIAMOND

Dwight Moody, the great itinerant evangelist, has been described as the Billy Graham of the 19th Century. He did many great things for God, but not without the help of his wife. William J. Peterson writes:

"Moody's accomplishments as an evangelist on both sides of the Atlantic are legendary. He travelled a million miles, preached to a hundred million people and saw 750,000 respond to a gospel invitation. He revolutionized mass evangelism and founded what is known as the Moody Bible Institute, the first Bible School of its kind" (Husbands and Wives p. 30).

Moody was a country boy who did not even know how to dress properly. He was brash and uncouth. He was impulsive, outspoken, dominant and informal and he had little formal education.

Molly a nobleman's daughter from a finer and more cultivated background, did not only teach Dwight Moody manners but dressed him up, without making him feel insulted or cheap. First, she threw away the "patient" shirts that he'd boasted "did not need washing for weeks". Next she got him to be a little more self-effacing and discriminating in taste.

As we noted in Dealing With Incompatibility in Your Marriage, "Emma was the gentle sand paper that smoothened Dwight Moody's rough edges and made him greater than he probably would have been." He himself confessed to the "miracle of having won the love of a woman who is so completely my superior with such a different temperament and background".

There is a diamond in your husband which needs to be polished. It may seem rough to the naked eye. But you alone can polish it to bring the real beauty out. Emma Moody polished her husband, and brought out the pearl that was hidden behind brashness and impulsiveness. What a glorious transformation. Our prayer is that our loving heavenly Father would find more wives who are willing to become instruments in His hands to polish, transform and re-direct their husbands to carry out His perfect will for their lives in Jesus' precious name. Amen!

SUSIE SPURGEON

CRITIC WITH A GOOD MOTIVE

Charles Spurgeon in many ways was like Moody. He too had little education. He was sometimes uncouth, displaying many "eccentricities". Susie, his wife called him Tirashatha.

ATIM OGAN

GIVER OF SHAPE AND COVERING

Like Adam said when he first saw Eve, I can say of Atim, my wife, that she is the "bone of my bone and the flesh of my flesh". The bone gives shape and covering to the delicate parts of the body. Without it the brain, for instance, cannot survive the daily barrages of life, not with our heads constantly being knocked on walls.

My wife has played this role well in many areas since we got married. Like Dwight Moody, I was a rough diamond that needed to be polished. I am still rough in many areas and in need of more polishing. Permit me to indulge in some self-plagiarism as I recount some of the things I have already noted about our marriage in the book Dealing with Incompatibility in Your Marriage.

Our marriage was a union of two opposites. As a single man I lived like a recluse. I was always in-doors, rarely going out. I had very limited number of faithful friends, who were kind enough to put up with my hermitic life. But when I got married God gave me a woman who is out-going. She made friends easily and was very open minded, sometimes to her own detriment. She would compel me to visit our friends, which I sometimes agreed to do with her after much compulsion. No sooner we enter a house, than she begins to appreciate everything she sees. “Oh, your curtains are so nice! What a wonderful dinning set,” she would go on chatting. At that point I would practically hold my head while screaming in my heart, “Oh God why can’t this woman keep quiet?”

I thought she had a problem. I did not know that I was the one who had a problem. I was too much of a recluse to appreciate the good things of life. I could stay alone in a room for three weeks reading novels and writing poems. Nothing else mattered to me. Just as I tied an invisible rope around my wife’s waist to draw her in, so also she tied a very visible rope around my legs to drag me out. Today I am more outgoing without being a Johnny Walker and she is more inward looking without being a monk. What a divine arrangement!

Another equally significant aspect of God’s divine arrangement in our marriage was in the area of dressing and general appearance. I had a terrible concept of dressing before marriage. I was okay with three trousers and three shirts, provided they were clean and not torn. I found it extremely difficult to buy myself clothes. In fact to buy a new shirt for myself was almost like a camel passing through the eye of a needle.

But God gave me a wife who likes to dress properly. And when a woman likes to dress well, she is bound to get her husband to do likewise. I would give my wife housekeeping money and she would use part of it to buy me clothes. Each time I protested, she would just shrug her shoulders as if to say “after all you are part of the house. Using housekeeping money to keep you well-dressed is part of house-keeping”. I even rebuked her when she spent her own money to buy me clothes.

One day I went to the wardrobe to collect a shirt when I noticed that virtually all my clothes were bought by my wife. Then the Lord spoke to me saying, “supposing you still had your three trousers and three shirts which may have been over washed and over ironed, and one day as you are preaching in a church, with the anointing of an evangelist, you bend down to demonstrate a point and your trouser tears behind because of over use, how would you feel?” I felt flustered. I did not know that God cared so much about dressing and had made an adequate arrangement for a helpmeet to rescue me since I could not rescue myself. Left on my own, God’s supposition above would surely have come to pass, with great embarrassment of course. But He loved me enough to send someone to dress me up.

In those days of ignorance I used to wear one pair of shoes until it “dies”. Sometimes the shoe is dead and I am not even aware of its “terminal” status. One day I went to church to coordinate a wedding. It was only after I got to church that I realized that the “mouth” of my shoe was open. It was as if I needed its help to sing praises to God at the wedding.

I was ashamed of myself, so I stood behind the wooden pulpit. I was pinned to one spot throughout the service even though I love to move around when I am ministering with or without a cordless microphone. On this day I stood still, tied to the pulpit by my conscience or was it my shoe? The congregation did not know that I was hiding the “iniquity” on my feet. Yet God had seen my folly and sent His “angel” again to rescue me.

As I was ministering, an usher by the door leading to the pulpit beckoned on me to go out. I ran out so no one could see my shoes. When I got out, he gave me a polythene bag saying, “Your wife said I should give this to you.” He pointed behind the church indicating that I could go there to unveil the mysterious package. I went behind the church, opened the bag and discovered that it was a new pair of shoes. No one told me what to do. I knew what I was supposed to do. I removed the old worn out shoes and put on the new shoes. And guess what, when I went back into the church I was bouncing like a “rubber ball”.

Perhaps another area in which Atim has played the role of giving me shape and covering is in my eating habits. I could go on for days without food if left alone. But I am now eating more and more because of her constant “harassment”.

Finally, as an intercessor, Atim and her friends—The Wailing Women, have given me a much needed prayer cover. This has not only given shape and shade to my ministry but has added a fresh and divine impetus to my life in moments of difficulty.

The best way to beat your husband is to fill in the gaps in his life. Look out for the rough edges in his character and polish them with the tender toughness of a polite but powerful princess. Help him to do those things he cannot do for himself. Compliment him. Make it virtually impossible for him to live without you. Do so in humility. And please remember what I said earlier, that the first person to polish a rough diamond deserves the first privilege of wearing it as a beautiful ornament.

Your marriage is worth the sacrifice. Go on, pay the price and you will reap a whirl-wind of joy and satisfaction.

Chapter Eleven

THE HUSBAND WHO IS NOT TRUSTWORTHY

Trust is a very scarce commodity these days. You could search every nook and cranny of the world and find only a handful of trustworthy people. Increasingly people are adopting dubious tactics in their relationships, students are cheating in exams more often than they did before. Shoplifting is increasing in scope globally. Companies are declaring profits that only exist on paper. They are trying to create a façade of profitability so more investors could be attracted.

We read and hear about these manifestations of untrustworthiness and they sometimes seem remote. The real problem arises when you live with a husband who, you discover, is not trustworthy. He did not show you any indications that he had such a problem while you were courting. You will probably not have married him if you knew he could not be trusted. But now you are married and this problem has surfaced. What do you do? How do you deal with the problem without throwing the baby and the bath water away?

First, realize that every man has one character flaw or the other. True, there are some flaws you could tolerate and there are others you are too irritated with to tolerate. Nevertheless, you need to realize that this problem is not unique to your husband. In fact some men can be completely trustworthy in one area and hopelessly unreliable in another. I know a man that is absolutely trusted by his boss at work because he has built and earned his/her trust, yet he lies so much to his wife that she does not believe one word he says. Why would a man tell the truth to one person and then lie to another on the same issue? Understanding the nature of man, and his tendency to exhibit a dual personality will help you to appreciate the complexity of your husband’s problem, and how you can assist him to overcome it. Before we analyse this nature of man and how it sometimes makes him unreliable, let us briefly articulate what we mean by trust.

WHAT IS TRUST?

Trust is the reliance on the integrity or justice of a person. It is confidence in some quality, feature or attribute of a thing. Trust depicts a confident expectation or hope. It showcases the quality of being reliable because of past consistency in displaying integrity and honesty in motive and action.

Trust does not manifest instantaneously. It has to be cultivated, nurtured and sustained. Like faith it has to be built up. Jude 20 says, “But ye, beloved, building up your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost”.

MANIFESTATIONS OF THE PROBLEM

Lack of trust manifests in several dimensions. Many couples who live together are merely enduring each other rather than enjoying their relationship. They live like cat and mouse, constantly suspicious of each other’s motives and actions.

Some wives have a hard time believing their husbands because of broken promises and half-truths. Husbands who are not trustworthy display the following characteristics.

1. They make promises they don’t keep. They are like politicians who forget their campaign promises after the election has been won.

2. They tell their wives that they are going on a business trip but end up in a holiday resort, sometimes with another woman.

3. They promise to buy gifts for their wives and children, probably in order to just dismiss their “pestering”. But they don’t do what they have agreed to do.

4. They tell lies and have to invent more and more lies to cover their tracts.

5. They are sexually immoral and unfaithful to the marital vows they made at the altar. Some husbands have even had children out of wedlock and carefully hidden it from their wives.

6. They tell you they will come for dinner at 7:00 p.m., but end up returning home at 12 midnight. Some of them never call to explain why they are not able to keep the dinner appointment. Others call, but they tell a cock and bull story of an emergency at the workplace.

7. They say beautiful things to their wives which they do not mean. They use flattering words to confuse you and make you believe a lie. They could call you the only sugar in their tea and go on to taste a thousand and one “honeys” outside. Their tongues are sugar coated; their words are smooth and sharp. But their actions are devastating.

8. They could “confess” their failures to you today, promise to change immediately and yet do worse things the next day.

This profile of a husband who is not trustworthy may not exactly be the profile of your husband. Your husband may have a milder problem or you may even have a more complex situation than the one presented above. Whatever your peculiar situation, you need skill to deal with an untrustworthy husband.

BE TRUSTWORTHY YOURSELF

Let your no be no and your yes be yes. You cannot give to your husband what you do not have. Find out if there are ways you may not have been completely honest in your relationship with your husband or with others. Some ladies would say, “Well, I know I have not been completely honest and reliable to people, but my husband is worse than I”. Such thinking is completely wrong. Throw it out of your mind. Sin is sin. God will not judge us by weighing our different sins on a balance to see whose is heavier. He will not justify those with lesser sins and

condemn those with graver ones. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God. All will be punished if they don't repent.

Jesus asked us to judge ourselves so we will not be judged. He commands us to take out the log in our eyes before we complain about the speck in another man's eyes. He enjoins us to be radically and spiritually violent against anything that will lead us to hell.

And if your hand makes you sin; cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed, than having two hands, to go to hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched (Mark 9:43).

COUNSELLING FOCUS

• Say what you really mean at all times.

• Do what you say you will do. Keep your word.

• Keep to appointments even when you find out it may no longer be convenient.

• Call those you have scheduled meetings with, when it is absolutely impossible to attend.

• Be faithful to your marital vows no matter what your husband does with his.

One woman decided to be sexually unfaithful because her husband was also unfaithful. She had been hurt on many occasions of learning about her husband's infidelity. She got fed up when he continued his escapades with other women and elected to pay him back in his own coin. She simply went to bed with her husband's best friend and made sure he was aware of what she did.

Two wrongs do not make a right.

Romans 12:19 says:

Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord. Therefore if your enemy hungers, feed him, if he thirsts, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

DETERMINE TO CULTIVATE, NURTURE AND SUSTAIN TRUST IN YOUR HUSBAND

Building or cultivating trust in another person is not easy. It is a difficult task when you have to do it for yourself, let alone when you have to do it for another person. Nevertheless, it is not impossible to cultivate trust in your husband if you are trustworthy yourself. Luke 6:38 says: “Give and it shall be given to you, good measure, pressed down, shaken together; and running over will men give unto your bosom; for with the same measure that you give, it will be measured back to you”

COUNSELLING FOCUS

To build trust in your husband you need:

1. A Determined Intention: This is a mind with an unwavering purpose. It is a determination borne out of a vital need. It is a heart made up to pursue a cause of action notwithstanding the challenges ahead.

2. An Exemplary Model: This is a standard that could be emulated. It is a pattern after which other models of trust could be built. It is a true representation of that which one desires to cultivate in another. You could become this model of trust for your husband. But you must be willing to work hard to perfect your level of trustworthiness. You must become an epistle of trust he can read. You must fulfil all your obligations to him without complaint. You must obey the injunction in 1st Peter 3:1-6.

Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: Even as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement.

3. An Unshakeable Foundation: This is the spiritual base upon which the entire structure of your family rests. It is the solid ground upon which trust cannot be destroyed, once built. It is the place that only one divine personality called Jesus can fill. 1st Corinthians 3:11 says, “For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ”. Jesus is the epitome of trust and trustworthiness. He came to die for sinners who naturally cannot be trusted. He came to take their place on the cross so that they can experience the joy and peace that comes from believing in Jesus—the only completely trustworthy personality that lived on earth. God the Father trusted Jesus to undertake the assignment of saving mankind. He maintained integrity while on earth and

fulfilled his mandate without compromise.

No one can build trust in marriage without building a relationship with the only one who is truly trustworthy. Do you have a personal relationship with Jesus? Have you confessed your sins and repented from iniquity? Are you truly born again? And do you have the assurance of salvation? A confident answer to these questions is indispensable if you truly want your husband to be trustworthy. Why not bow your head and your heart, just where you are now and confess your sins. Ask Jesus to forgive you and wash away your sins with His blood. Invite Him into your heart now to be your Lord and saviour. Thank God for your salvation. Now make a bold declaration that you are born again. Go ahead, do it. You will experience an immediate peace that passes all understanding, and a new joy you have never known will overwhelm you now. Congratulations!

Having had the encounter of salvation, through Jesus Christ our Lord, you must pray that your husband will have the same experience at God's appointed time. Write this down as a vision that will kindle in you a new passion for ministry. There is no way your husband can truly become trustworthy until the foundation of Jesus has been laid in his life. God has just commissioned you to ensure that this foundation must be laid. Pray for your husband as you have never prayed before. Remember what John 3:3 says, ". . . unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God". Don't put the cart before the horse. Desiring that your husband must be trustworthy without the foundation of Jesus Christ in his life is like putting the cart before the horse. Man is conceived in iniquity and born in sin. Only the saving grace of God can deliver him from this foundation of sin and iniquity.

Do your part in loving and praying for your husband and God will do His part of saving and making him reliable. Matthew 6:33 says, "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you".

There are many women who had husbands that were completely unreliable.

Today salvation has made a difference in their husbands. Many such men have become men of integrity and love.

Unless your confidence is in God you cannot be trusted. Neither can you trust anyone. Focus on the salvation of your husband and God will redirect his focus on your need for a man of integrity. Call upon the Lord to save him and God will answer you. Psalm 20:7 says, “Some trust in chariots, and some in horses, but we will remember the name of the Lord our God”. Trust in God to change your husband. Don’t trust in your strength through arguments. Don’t trust in your husband to change himself. He has no such power without God’s grace. Jeremiah 17:5 says, “. . . cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart departs from the Lord”.

KILL ALL THE TRUST KILLERS IN YOUR RELATIONSHIP

There are many forces that destroy trust in human relationships. To overcome your husband’s unreliability you must eliminate them, whether they are found in you or in him. There is a spirit behind every force that kills trust in the family. To “kill” these trust killers you must bind this spirit. Jesus said that no man can go into another man’s house to plunder his goods unless he first binds him. So you must exercise your spiritual authority over every spirit responsible for the confusion in your marriage. Bind the spirits behind the trust killers in your home.

INFERIORITY—This is an unhealthy state of feeling that one is lowly ranked in the pecking order of a given society or relationship. It is borne out of a low self-esteem and manifests in lack of confidence in one’s abilities.

Inferiority complex can make a man tell lies. It can make him claim to be what he is not. I have personally dealt with cases of men who told lies about their social and educational background to the women they were courting just to win their hands in marriage. One man claimed to have had a Ph.D. when he barely finished his first degree. Another man said he was the son of a very wealthy chief, when the chief was only a distant uncle. Yet another husband told the wife that he was the manager of a company that turned out to be non-existent.

Some men feel that there is something wrong when their wives have a higher educational qualification or earn more money than they. Those who are compulsive liars could forge certificates just to keep pace with their spouses. Others who may not do so sometimes bully their wives whenever they make useful suggestions for the progress of the family. Such men would often say, “I am the head of this house, so let me be head”. They may act unilaterally for fear of being “opposed” by the one who “feels she knows it all”.

COUNSELLING FOCUS

To get this type of man to trust you and be trusted:

• You will need to constantly and quietly reassure him.

• Praise him for his good deeds.

• Reaffirm his opinions and tell him how you respect and appreciate them.

• Don’t be too quick to criticize him.

• Avoid being argumentative.

• Tell him you love him irrespective of who he is.

• Assure him that it is not what he has that determines your relationship with him.

• Make him know that you will honour and reverence him as your husband no matter his status.

• Encourage him to come clean with you over every issue and make sure that you are not judgemental when he does.

Sometimes the very opposite of inferiority could cause a relational problem in a marriage. A husband could have a superiority complex which manifests in his putting down his wife. Most men generally feel that they are not their wives' equal. They are superior and their wives are inferior. This erroneous thinking has led men to feel that women are "weak, worrisome and quarrelsome", worthy only to be restricted to the kitchen and generally made to keep quiet in society.

A man with this mentality could turn the wife into a doormat. He may not consult her whenever a major decision in the family should be taken. He may feel that she cannot be trusted to proffer a sensible opinion. A woman who seeks to "beat" such a husband must not believe in this refuge of lies. She must determine to do something with all her God-given talents, not necessarily to prove any point but to satisfy herself that man's mundane opinion will not obliterate the excellency of God's glory in her life. When your husband sees what you can do, he will begin to reconsider his foolish opinions about women in general and about you in particular.

INSINCERITY—This is not being honest in actually expressing your thoughts, emotions and how you feel about a given issue. It is the act of deception. Some men could give their wives permission to do a particular thing but later turn round to oppose it. Women are thoroughly bemused when this happens. Often times the initial permission is half-heartedly given; either because an external person was around or the man would have felt embarrassed not to have given the wife a go-ahead; or because he wanted sex from his wife at that time and used it as a trade-off.

A man could ask his wife to make fried rice for him and turn round to say he'd rather eat Jollof rice, when what he originally requested is served. One man was always cantankerous at breakfast time. If his wife served poached eggs he wanted it fried and if she served fried eggs, he wanted the poached ones. Fed up with this inconsistency, his wife sought counsel from God on how to deal with this troublesome husband. God gave her wisdom to poach one egg, fry another and serve them at the same time. The man came to the breakfast table, took a look at the poached and fried eggs and then called out to the wife. "Woman, come here", he barked. "Look at these two eggs, you poached the wrong one and fried the wrong one".

COUNSELLING FOCUS

To deal with this kind of insincerity:

• Do your best at every given time.

• Realise that if your physical husband will not appreciate your best, you have a spiritual husband who will. His approval is better than any other approval you need. His appreciation is enough to make up for whatever wrong feeling you may have because your physical husband did not appreciate your effort.

• Don't abandon your responsibilities merely because you are not approved.

• Don't neglect your husband merely because he is insincere.

• Recognise that you do not wrestle against flesh and blood but against principalities and powers. They are the chief engineers behind every irritation in your marriage. Vent your anger against them and not against your husband. Fight with them and leave your husband alone. Fighting with your husband will divert your attention from dealing with the real enemy.

• Fight insincerity with sincerity. Give the opposite of what you are getting.

• Do not be judgemental with your husband. Don't be unduly critical of his folly. Some men do not know what they are doing. It's as if they are dancing to an invisible drum beating them into a rhythm of foolishness. Why not deal with that invisible force manipulating your husband against every sense of decency. Even if you think he knows what he is doing, confronting him like a wounded lioness will not solve the problem. Follow peace with all men, without holiness no man can see God. God will fight for you. So rest in the assurance that He is not blind to what is happening to you.

A woman wanted some money to buy food for the home; she made a request to her husband just before he left for work. This man, an evangelist, shunned his wife, sarcastically asking her if she thought he had a tree behind his house that produced silver and gold.

During lunch the evangelist went to a posh restaurant to eat. He ordered fried rice and chicken. He had finished eating the rice and was getting ready to pounce on the chicken when he had a divine encounter which years of active service on crusade grounds had never given him. As he picked up the chicken with his watery mouth ready to receive the precious price, he heard a loud voice. "Don't eat that chicken", boomed the voice. The evangelist thought that someone behind him was trying to crack a funny joke. He refused to respond to the "joker". His hand continued to approach his mouth with the chicken when the voice came again. "Don't eat that chicken, else I will strike you". The evangelist turned round to look at who was speaking and only then realized that there was no one behind him. God was apparently speaking to him. Never before had he heard the audible voice of God. Terrified and still holding the chicken, he humbly asked, "Lord what should I do?" The Lord told him, this time not with an audible voice, to wrap the chicken, take it home and give to his wife.

You must rest in the Lord. Do not fret, do not be afraid. "You will not need to fight in this battle. Position yourselves, stand still and see the salvation of the Lord . . ." (2 Chronicles 20:17a).

INSECURITY—This is a feeling generated by acute lack of self-worth or significance. It is activated by a sense of having no defence, no cover and no protection. A man who is not secure cannot trust and be trusted. He is often chasing shadows which in turn chase him. He ends up running away from these shadows and thereby failing to confront the reality about himself.

There are many factors that could make a man insecure. These include childhood fears that have not been dealt with, abuse with scars which have not healed, inability to provide for his wife and children and a feeling of inferiority.

COUNSELLING FOCUS

To help your husband to deal with insecurity:

• Identify the root cause of his problem.

• Don’t reinforce them by your wrong attitudes. A man who has an inferiority complex could feel intimidated by your academic credentials, especially when you always flaunt your opinions at his face. A man who earns less money than you could feel intimidated when you do not join forces with him to deal with the financial problems at home. Be careful to either go with him to jointly buy whatever the home needs or give him the money to do so. Cautious navigation is required to deal with such men. The Lord will give you wisdom.

• Be like a mother hen to him, providing the cover he needs in his moments of deep anguish. This demands aggressive love and aggressive prayer. These two are unbeatable combinations. Men are sometimes overgrown babies that are still looking for the protective cover of a mother. Don’t just be a wife to him be a mother.

INTRANSIGENCE—This is the act of refusing to agree or come to an amicable settlement of an issue. It is the character of a stubborn, unbending and completely obnoxious husband. He decides on a path and cannot be persuaded to change it even when he is heading for destruction. Such a man cannot be trusted. “Confidence in [such] an unfaithful man in time of trouble is like a bad tooth and a foot out of joint” (Proverbs 25:19). He does not listen to advice. He is like a blind buffalo raging without restriction.

To deal with such a man you have to be completely dependent on God, because talking to such a man is like pouring water on the back of a duck. It always slips off.

INFLEXIBILITY—This is the condition of a man who is incapable of being bent. Such a man is rigid, unyielding and stubborn. He is also intolerant. These characteristics of an inflexible husband make him untrustworthy. They usually kill a wife’s desire to relate to her husband. But you must “kill” the spirit behind this attitude of your husband before it kills your relationship.

PRAYER FOCUS

• Bind the spirits of intransigence and inflexibility in your husband.

• Ask God to make him malleable in His hand.

• Pray that God will soften your husband to follow the path divinely chosen for him, rather than the one he has chosen for himself. If you are praying and trusting God, He will arrange divine roadblocks for your husband. He will meet dead ends a few times and God will use these to soften him.

• Don’t go arguing or contending with him. Just hand him over to His maker. He

knows how to deal with him.

• Enter into a covenant of divine protection on his behalf. Plead with God to preserve his life even when He allows him to go through a Damascus Road encounter. Paul was a very intransigent and inflexible young man. He was going into Damascus to arrest and imprison Christians. The believers in Damascus must have locked up the gate of the city to him through intercession. At midday Paul had a life-changing encounter on the road to Damascus. He was thrown down from his horse. He became blind, but God spared his life and later healed him. He became a trusted and tested Apostle of Jesus Christ, the very one he persecuted. The heart of every king is in the hand of God. Hand over your inflexible husband to God and he knows what to do with him.

INSATIABILITY—This is the condition of never being satisfied. A man with this character can never be appeased. He is covetous and nothing you do seems to please him. He does not trust you to do anything to satisfy his taste. Neither can you trust him, because his expectations are way beyond anything normal. Again you must do your best to satisfy such a man. Having done your best; leave the outcome to God. Only God can completely satisfy the needs of any man. No human being can perfectly satisfy the longing of the human heart. Ask God to do for him what he is expecting you to do. Pray that God will control his appetite for whatever he desires which you cannot provide.

INFIDELITY—This is sexual unfaithfulness. It is one of the greatest trust killers in any marriage. It destroys the covenant relationship between a man and his wife and has led to many cases of separation and divorce.

Infidelity is a snare that takes one’s life, an arrow that strikes the liver (Proverbs 7:23). It is a weapon by which strongmen are slain (Proverbs 7:26). It is a way of hell, descending to the chambers of death (Proverbs 7:27). It is a sign of lack of understanding. It is a means by which one destroys his own soul. It is a harbinger of wounds and dishonour (Proverbs 6:32). It is a source of reproach which may not be wiped away (Proverbs 6:33).

This dangerous arrow has been released to destroy many relationships. Again you are not helpless against it. However, there is need for you to do the following if you feel or suspect you have caused the problem unwittingly, one way or the other.

Do a soul search with yourself. Is there anything you may have done to warrant his infidelity? True, it's not all the time you do something to warrant the unfaithfulness of a husband. Some men still fool around when they have "angels" as wives. Nevertheless, find out if you have done all that you can possibly do for him.

Repent if you have denied your husband his conjugal rights. 1st Corinthians 7:4-6 says,

The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife. Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency. But I speak this by permission, and not of commandment.

Some Christian women deny their husbands conjugal rights on the grounds that they are fasting. Some husbands have had to masturbate to get relief. Others have turned to other women or to pornography. Note that Paul did not prohibit sexual intercourse between a man and his wife merely because one party is fasting. He rather commanded that withdrawal from sex during consecration by fasting should be by consent. In other words, ask your husband permission to be excused from sex during your fasting. Thank God if he grants this permission. But be ready to yield to his advances if he is unable to grant you this permission. The same rule applies to any husband who wants a similar excuse.

COUNSELLING AND PRAYER FOCUS

• Don’t make sex uninteresting for him by just lying like a cold cucumber on the bed. Some women behave like frozen fish when their husbands are in the heat of passion. They just lie there waiting for him to finish his business so they could sleep. Men who suffer this “trauma” are often tempted to look out for what they consider to be greener pastures. Please make your sexual pastures greener than any other. Don’t give him the chance to think about any other woman. Give him the best he can get at home.

• Deal with the spirit of the strange woman that lures your husband away from you. This spirit is described in Proverbs 7:6-27.

• Pray that your husband’s feet will never pass near her house.

• Overthrow her deceptive attires, perfumes and garments by which she lures men. She is crafty at heart, loud and rebellious. Her feet do not stay at home. At times she is outside, at times in the open square, lurking at every corner. She is looking for who to catch and kiss. She has an impudent face and she talks smooth. I have peace offerings with me; today I have paid my vows. So I came out to meet you, diligently to seek your face and I have found you (Proverbs 7:14-15).

• Pray that she will never find your husband; that God will blind her eyes to his whereabouts. Pray that your husband will shut his ears to her alluring words, that he will never hear her say: I have spread my bed with tapestry, coloured coverings of Egyptian linen. I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes and cinnamon. Come let us take our fill of love until morning; let us delight ourselves with love. For my husband is not home; he has gone a long journey, he has taken a bag of money with him and will come on the appointed day (Proverbs 7:16-20).

• Block your husband’s ears from her deceptive and enticing speech. Shield him from the arrows that strike the liver. Deliver him from the snare that takes one’s life. Don’t fight with your husband; fight with the spirit that seeks to slay him.

CULTIVATE THE TRUST BUILDERS

As you destroy the trust killers in your marriage, simultaneously cultivate the trust builders. Agape love is a trust builder. It is rooted in the character of God, who loved mankind even in our unfaithfulness. Romans 5:8 says, “God commended His love towards us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.” God is love (1st John 4:46). And there are five pillars or keys of love upon which you can build and rebuild trust in your relationship. These are:

1. Communication

2. Commitment

3. Contentment

4. Faithfulness

5. Sharing in joy and pain, success and suffering.

Communication: The verbal or non-verbal expression of ideas and emotions. You need this key to unlock your husband’s heart irrespective of the way he has treated you.

• Continue to horizontally and verbally express your love to him.

• Practically demonstrate this love by actively ministering to his needs.

• Make it clear to him that many waters of affliction cannot quench the love you have for him.

• Vertically communicate the love you have for your husband to God in prayer.

• Reaffirm that you understand why God brought you into your husband's life at such at time as this.

• Ask God to give you the strength to act as your husband's intercessor; plead on his behalf to God.

• Remind God that you are the one He is looking for to stand in the gap and make up the hedge so that He will not destroy your husband.

• Tell Him that unlike it was in Ezekiel 22:30 when God could not find a man to stand in the gap, you are standing on behalf of your husband.

• Tell God to honour His word by not pouring out His indignation against your husband.

• Tell Him not to recompense your husband's deeds upon his head.

• Release His mercy to speak above His judgment.

Commitment: The determination to stick out and stay put in a relationship no matter what happens. This is a vital key which depicts staying power. It is a sign of persistence and perseverance. It is an indispensable quality if you must run and win the love marathon and overcome separation and divorce. It is lack of commitment that leads to no-fault divorces. The courts are today granting people divorce certificates even when there is no apparent reason to break up the marriage. One man simply says he no longer loves his wife and a legally constituted court presided by a supposedly wise judge simply says, "Okay. You can go your way". The vow "until death do us part" has been thrown into the dustbin of ancient legal history. It is no more maritally correct in this contemporary era when everything is in a state of flux.

• Determine to stick out with your husband.

• Behave like your Heavenly Father who says, “He will never leave nor forsake you”.

• Tell your husband the same thing that you will never leave nor forsake him.

• Reaffirm this commitment to your children. Tell them you love them enough to work out your marriage with your husband.

• Reject any ministration to follow the way of the world. There is a way that seems right unto man, but it is the way of death.

• Ask the Lord to honour your commitment by using it to transform your husband and his commitment to you.

• Tell God to do a work of grace in his life and completely restore him back to God and back to you and your children.

• Plead with God to bring him back home as He did the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32).

Contentment: The feeling of satisfaction even in a situation of limitation. This is a grace which only comes with complete reassurance that God is in control. 1st Timothy 6:6 says, “Now godliness with contentment is great gain”. Anxiety and fear have never solved any problem. On the contrary they compound problems and make them complicated.

Be content with God in every situation you find yourself. Your situation may be very bad. But God remains a good God. Don’t forget His promises in Romans 8:28.

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.

• Ask God to fill you with the greater godliness and contentment that brings greater gain and glory.

• Tell Him to make all things work together for your good, for the good of your husband, your children and the society as a whole.

• Ask God to increase your love for Him and for your husband.

• Tell him to help you relate the difficult situations you face to the call of God upon your life.

• Declare that by God's grace you will not fail as an agent of redemption for your family. Call upon Him to equip you to rescue your lost husband and your entire family.

• Ask for grace to suffer the type of persecution every agent of redemption had to suffer at the hands of the very people they were sent to redeem.

Realize that what you are going through at the hand of your husband and his relations is not strange. As an agent of redemption you will be initially despised and rejected by the very people you are sent to redeem. Jim Elliot died at the hands of those to whom he went to give the gospel. His widow did not give up. Without bitterness she continued to minister in the land that drank her husband's blood and amongst the people responsible for his death.

Every agent of redemption will suffer at the hand of those he or she is sent to redeem. So don't give up. There is a glory about to be revealed in you. Paul said in Romans 8:18, "for I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us".

• Pray that God will help you not to consider the pain of the present suffering you are going through.

• Ask Him to give you a revelation of the glory which shall soon be revealed in

your life and in your family.

• Plead with God to give you perseverance, persistence and staying power. Stand firm and make the declaration of Paul in 2 Corinthians 4:8-10. “I am hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed. I am perplexed, yet not in despair. I am persecuted but not forsaken. I am struck down, but not destroyed. I am always carrying in my body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus may be manifested in my husband and in my entire family”.

Faithfulness: This is the living reality of trusting and being trusted. It depicts dependability, stability and consistency. These hallmarks of faithfulness are vital keys for building trust.

As you demonstrate faithfulness to your husband God will use the anointing of the faithful in you to reproduce faithfulness in him.

• Pray that that which is good in you will rub off on your husband. Just as evil communication corrupts good manners, so also good manners can change a man notorious for evil communication.

• Ask God to give you greater grace to be faithful to Him and to your husband.

• Invoke the spirit of faithfulness upon your husband. Ask God to make him a faithful witness that will not lie (Proverbs 14:5). Tell God to turn him into a faithful Ambassador that brings health (Proverbs 13:17).

Sharing In Joy And Pain, Success And Suffering: This is the promise of “for better, for worse”, “for richer and poorer”. It is the seal of commitment to the marriage covenant. It is the mutual agreement of husband and wife that depicts complete loyalty to each other at all times, under all circumstances, whether good or bad.

It has become maritally inconvenient to make this full-proof commitment today. Nevertheless, if we must build trust in our relationships, we must seek for the restoration of this confession. It has been argued by some modern day preachers that the confession of “for better, for worse” is a negative, unnecessary and an unscriptural invocation of trouble for couples—in fact, a curse. This is not true. It is only a commitment of couples to stick with each other no matter the vicissitudes they face. It reassures a husband that the wife will not abandon him when things are rough and vice versa. To assume that couples who say, “for better, for better and in health alone”, will not pass through hard times is naïve. Life is a mystery bag of ups and downs, hard times and good times. The assurance we have from God is that He will always be with us at all times. The hard times will not overwhelm us. Neither will the down turns of life prevent us from rising to the utmost heights He has appointed for us.

• Make your husband know that you will stick with him at all times, whether things are good or bad.

• Ask God to make your husband stick with you whether things are good or bad.

• Pray that your commitment to each other will be full-proof and complete.

• Ask God to use the momentary times of difficulty in your marriage to teach you eternal lessons you may never be able to learn in a theological school.

• Pray that God will give your family a revelation of 1st Peter 5:10. “But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen and settle you”.

• Tell God that you have “suffered a while” and that it is now time to “perfect, establish, strengthen and settle you”. Remind Him that “to everything there is a season, a time to every purpose under the sun” (Ecclesiastes 3:1). Be bold in telling Him for I sense in my spirit that the time for your settlement is not far off. It’s time for God to settle you and your family. Once you have done your part, rest in Him. He knows how best he wants to settle you. Don’t even begin to dictate for God what He must do. He is a master arranger of situations and circumstances. He knows exactly what is best for you. He works in mysterious

ways, his wonders to perform. Allow Him to work out His purpose in your life.

Chapter Twelve

THE HUSBAND WHO REFUSES TO TAKE SPIRITUAL RESPONSIBILITY AT HOME

AS A PRIEST

The husband is the head of the home. As head he has certain spiritual responsibilities bestowed on him by God. He is supposed to locate and identify the “garden” God has allocated to his family to tend and keep (Genesis 2:15). This garden is not only his own life’s assignment but also the general mandate given by God to his family. He is supposed to work this garden with diligence and discipline to enable his family to “eat freely” (Genesis 2:16). He is supposed to carefully identify the divine prohibitions given by God to him and his family. It is his responsibility to warn every member of his family against the violation of these prohibitions. Usually, violation portends death. For instance, “the Lord commanded the man, saying, of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it, you shall surely die” (Genesis 2:16-17).

It was the man’s responsibility to translate this warning or prohibition into concrete terms for the comprehension and obedience of the entire family. The man is supposed to give character and identity to his wife, and by extension the entire family. It was Adam that called Eve “woman”—that is womb-man, a process, which involved giving her character and identity.

The various roles depicted above and graphically demonstrated in Adam the first man, were patterns expected of every husband heading a family. The man therefore is meant to play the role of priest in the family.

PROFILE OF THE HUSBAND WHO WOULD NOT PLAY HIS ROLE AS A PRIEST

• He is often blind to the reality of the new birth.

• He may be born again, but still can be lukewarm in the things of the Spirit.

• He has no spiritual direction; does not know why he was created and does not give a damn about that.

• He is carnally minded, only interested in the things that gratify the flesh

• He loves to sleep.

• He hates to pray and is angry with those whose fervent prayer lives remind him of his failure in this area.

• He abandons his spiritual responsibilities to his wife.

• He is often a prayer collector in times of difficulty. He is always looking for those to pray for him.

• He is a potential candidate for enlistment in the lodge or in a cult.

• Unless he belongs to the Cornelius Company he hates giving money to God's work.

• He has a negative opinion of pastors, especially those of Evangelical and Pentecostal persuasions.

• He is not irredeemable if his wife and children understand that it is not God's will that any man should perish.

WHO IS A PRIEST?

A priest is someone who intercedes to God on behalf of men. He is divinely appointed for men in things pertaining to God. He offers both gifts and sacrifices

for sins. He is supposed to ". . . have compassion on those who are ignorant and are going astray, since he himself is also beset by weaknesses" (Hebrews 5:1-3).

The priesthood of the family, like the priesthood of the nation, was a symbol of honour, and glory. "And no man takes this honour to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron was" (Hebrews 5:4). It is unfortunate that an institution that God established and highly honoured has been despised and rejected by many husbands. Some men are tentative in assuming their responsibility as priests. Others have out-rightly rejected their commission. The sad thing is that many of these men claim to be Christians.

The question we address in this chapter is how can a woman "beat" a husband who refuses to play his role as a priest of the family? Does she just fold her hands and resign to the fact that her husband has refused to play his role and so let God sort out His problems with him? Does she just wait, trusting God that one day he will assume his exalted and honoured position as priest? What about the children, how does she get them to follow the precepts they need to imbibe in order to become all that God created them to be? What must the wife do especially when her husband neither wants to play his role nor wants her to do anything about the situation?

Many families have suffered uncountable damages because of the negligence of fathers who choose to be idle and empty heads. Others are still being harassed by spiritual forces that could be put in their proper places had the men taken up their mandate as priests.

DON'T SIT BACK AND DO NOTHING

Sitting back will be too dangerous an approach to adopt no matter what your husband thinks or says. Some women have chosen this option in the name of

submitting to their husbands according to the injunctions of scripture. This is wrong. Besides, it is a gross misunderstanding of the commandment which says, “Wives submit to your husbands in all things”. God does not expect you to submit to your own husband in gross violation of his own commandments. In Acts 4:19-20 “. . . Peter and John answered [the Sanhedrin] and said to them, Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard”.

Some wives have been intimidated when their husbands stopped them from going to church and even praying at home. You must never be intimidated by such a husband. It is neither in your interest nor in your husband’s to stop the worship of God. Adhering to his instructions is the surest way to expose him to be plucked by the devil. It is also the easiest way to expose yourself and your children to demonic infiltration and eventual destruction.

BE AS WISE AS A SERPENT,

HARMLESS AS A DOVE

This was the instruction Jesus gave to His disciples when he sent them to witness. A serpent is cunning and has the ability to camouflage in an environment without detection. On the other hand, a dove is a harmless bird, full of serenity and purity. It is one of the two birds that mate for life. The other is the eagle. When a male and female dove mates they do so for life. They are faithful to each other and there is no infidelity.

God expects you to display the cunning toughness of the serpent and the tender purity of the dove. He expects you to achieve the ultimate objective of worshipping God with all your mind, soul and body without causing unnecessary disruptions in your family, through contention with your husband. Is this really possible? If yes, how?

There may be times your husband will physically stand at the door to stop you from going to a fellowship. You may not need to fight with him at this point. You may simply have to go back inside the room to pray silently. You may even humour him by taking his clothes to wash at this time. You could decide to minister directly to his need. This will help him to understand that you love and honour him irrespective of his opposition to your spiritual commitment.

One self-willed woman did not initially adopt this approach. She often contended with her husband whenever he opposed her desire to attend a Church fellowship. Sometimes their confrontation degenerated into a physical duel. He would stand at the door to prevent her from passing. She on her part would shout, “You are not my God. You are not my God. I must go to Church whether you like it or not.” The struggle between them would intensify and sometimes she would sneak under his legs and run out to church.

One day she heard a sermon that there is a way that seems right unto a man but that it is the way of destruction. She heard that the Spirit of God does not work through the wrath of man. She further heard that, “to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God” (Romans 8:6-8).

She decided to change her approach in dealing with her husband. When it was the next fellowship time, she dressed up to go out. As usual her husband came to the door to stop her. She smiled at him, then went on her knees. She looked him in the face, which obviously was very rumpled up expecting the usual confrontation. “I am sorry for all the times I have fought with you over my decision to attend church fellowship”, she said softly. “I love the Lord and would really like to worship Him. But I also want you to know that I love you”. She got up and went back into the room after the short speech without waiting for his response. She later gathered her husband’s clothes and started washing them. After that, she cooked his favourite meal and sat at the table to watch him eat.

He was confused at this time, because he did not know what to make of this new-found wife. He did everything to provoke her in the subsequent days without getting any negative response from her. She continued to pray at home, worship the Lord as best she could. This repentant wife was still wondering how the matter would end when her husband came one fellowship day to ask her if she would not want to go to church. Proverbs 4:7 says that “Wisdom is the principal thing, therefore get wisdom and with all your getting, get understanding”. Proverbs 17:24 adds that “Wisdom is in the sight of him that has understanding, but the eyes of the fool are at the ends of the earth”.

THERE IS A SPIRIT OF SUBMISSION

DIFFERENT FROM ACTION

Ephesians 5:22-24 gives wives a very curious injunction:

Wives submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord, for the husband is the head of the wife, as also Christ is the head of the church, and He is the saviour of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.

In this scripture, wives are commanded to submit to their own husbands “in everything”. What does this mean? Does it mean that a wife must obey her husband who tells her to steal for him? Does it mean that a wife must obey her husband who stops her from attending fellowship?

I completely agree with the injunction that wives must submit to their husbands in everything. For me, “everything” means “everything” as far as a wife’s

submission is concerned. Now wait a minute. Let me explain before you drop this book and pick up stones to throw at me.

There is a spirit of submission different from action. If, for instance, your husband tells you to go and steal for him, the first thing I expect you to do is to go on your knees before him. Nicely but firmly tell him that surely this is not God's will. Plead with him to reconsider his demands. Tell him that you respect him and know that he is a responsible and respectable man. Realize that as you are doing this on your knees, a position symbolic of a state of self-abnegation, you are actually submitting to him while clearly not acting on his instructions. This clearly shows that there is nothing unscriptural your husband tells you to do that you cannot respond to him with the spirit of submission. While responding to him with the spirit of submission you must act according to God's express will in His word. This means gently and nicely relating to your husband while rejecting his bizarre and unscriptural demands.

Many women do not deal with their husbands this way. They stand up to them, shouting, screaming and declaring their stand with a holier-than-thou attitude. Some even insult their husbands on the ground that their demands are anti-Christian. This is the easiest way to stiffen his resolve to fight and hinder you from doing God's will. You can actually submit to your husband in everything, as the scripture commands. Remember, however, that there is a spirit of submission, which is different from action. You can disobey your husband's unscriptural demands without insulting him. You can humble yourself before him while doing what God expects you to do.

There is no way you can achieve this delicate balance without the grace of God.

PRAYER FOCUS

• Ask God to give you wisdom to submit to your husband in “everything”.

• Tell Him to give you the courage to obey God rather than man, and still be able to humble yourself before your husband.

• Ask God to give you the wisdom of the serpent and the meekness of the dove.

• Ask the Lord to balance your tenderness with uncompromising toughness.

• Pray for the grace to respond to the promptings of the Holy Spirit whenever He gives you direction on how to deal with a particular challenging situation in your home.

RECOGNISE THAT YOU ARE ALSO A PRIEST

The fact that your husband has refused to play his role as a priest should not prevent you from playing your own role. Yes, he is the head-priest of the home, but you are his assistant. The Old Testament priesthood was a restricted priesthood. The priests were from a particular tribe. They were exclusively male and only one man could operate as a high priest at a time. Even so, he could only enter the Holy of Holies to offer sacrifices once a year.

But the New Testament priesthood is a more open and unrestricted priesthood. It is not restricted to males. It is universal and has no territorial boundaries. It has no time constraints. It is a royal priesthood of a peculiar people called out of darkness into God’s marvelous light. Revelation 1:5-6 says “And from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood and has made us kings and priests to his God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen”.

You are a “priest” and “king” and you must perform these dual functions in your

home. A priest offers sacrifices to God on behalf of men. A king rules and exercises dominion over a territory. God has given you the mandate to exercise dominion in your home and beyond. However, do not usurp your husband's authority. Take up his spiritual responsibility whenever he fails to do so. But be ready to take the backseat and let him lead when he is ready and willing to do so. As we noted earlier, you cannot afford to fold your hands and do nothing merely because your husband, the head-priest of the home, is negligent. There should be no room for a spiritual vacuum in your home.

GOD IS RAISING WOMEN AS

PROPHETIC STONES

Jesus said if men should keep silent, refusing to praise Him, God will raise stones to cry out (Luke 19:40). Women are becoming the prophetic stones that God is raising to do His work in the end time. Men who refuse to take up their responsibilities in church will soon discover that God will raise a replacement army to forestall any vacuum being created.

There is an Eliakim Company positioned to replace the Shebna Company. The Shebna Company are hewing sepulchers for themselves. They are carving beautiful tombs, where dead men's bones are buried. They have established homes, churches and institutions that look outwardly beautiful but are rotten with corrupted flesh inside. Of the Shebna Company and its replacement the Lord said:

Indeed, the Lord will throw you away violently, O mighty man and will seize you. He will surely turn violently and toss you like a ball into a large country; there you shall die and there your glorious chariots shall be the shame of your master's house. So I will drive you out of your office and from your position, he will pull you down. Then it shall be in that day that I will call My servant

Eliakim, the son of Hilkiah, I will clothe him with your robe and strengthen him with your belt; I will commit your responsibility into his hand. He shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the house of Judah. The key of the house of David, I will lay on his shoulder, so he shall open and no one shall shut; and he shall shut, and no one shall open. I will fasten him as a peg in a secure place, and he will become a glorious throne of his father's house (Isaiah 22:17-23).

• Ask God to enlist you into the Eliakim Company, not necessarily to replace your husband, but to function on his behalf as a precursor who will usher him into his proper role at the fullness of time.

• Plead with God to deliver your husband from spiritual laxity, illiteracy and laziness.

• Call on the Lord to deliver your husband from the Shebna Company of dead and dying institutions.

• Ask God to send down fire to destroy any whited sepulchres or tombs he may have built as a member of the Shebna Company.

• Intercede that God will spare your husband from inclusion among those "He will surely turn violently and toss… like a ball into a large country".

• Enter into a covenant with God that your husband will not die before his time, and that he will not die before denouncing his association with the symbols of death and dying in the Shebna Company.

• Plead with God not to drive your husband out of his office, not to pull him down from the original position appointed for him since the foundation of the world.

• Decree that one day your husband will join the Eliakim Company, and that God will clothe him with a new robe, and strengthen him with a new belt.

• Declare that God will commit a special responsibility into your husband's hand and that one day he will become a spiritual father to your family and the inhabitants of your nation.

• Declare that God will lay on your husband's shoulder the key of David, "so he shall open, and no one shall shut; and he shall shut and no one shall open".

• Ask God to fasten your husband as a peg in a secure place, so he can one day sit upon a glorious throne in his heavenly father's house.

YOUR ROLE AS A PRIEST AT HOME

As you prophetical call on God to bring your husband into his rightful place, you must play your role as a priest in the home. Tell God that you are playing this role on your behalf and on behalf of your husband. Tell him to bless you on your own account and that of your husband whom you represent as a helpmeet or suitable assistant.

OFFERING GIFTS AND SACRIFICES

This demands giving up something precious temporarily that someone may gain something permanently. Offering gifts and sacrifices demands paying a price. Remember that as a woman God created you as a burden bearer. You have a spiritual womb with which you can carry the burdens of your husband and children. Times may come when it would seem as if the burden is overwhelming you. But don't forget that you have what it takes to fulfill this mandate. Consider what it took you to go through pregnancy, labour and delivery. Notice that at some point it would almost seem as if you cannot make it. But somehow God had always been gracious. You have always overcome the overwhelming odds that faced you. Even when you were between life and death, the mercy and grace of God had always been by you.

COUNSELLING AND PRAYER FOCUS

As you think about God’s goodness and help at critical moments in the past:

• Refuse to be bitter that your husband has left huge spiritual and physical responsibilities over to you.

• Determine that you will carry these responsibilities no matter what happens.

• Ask God for the grace to offer a more excellent sacrifice this year than the one you offered last year. “By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it, he being dead, still speaks” (Hebrew 11:4).

• Be careful to assess the nature of your sacrifice, especially whether it is the right type of witness. Every sacrifice must be:

A Doctrinal Witness: One which is done by faith and testifies to divine excellence. “By faith Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice . . .”

A Quantitative Witness: One which is greater in volume than anything you have ever offered before or anything some others have offered. “Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice than Cain”.

An Internal Witness: One which the person making the sacrifice himself can assess and be fully satisfied that it is clearly acceptable to God. “Abel offered to God . . . a sacrifice through which he obtained a witness that he was righteous . . .”

An External Witness: One which an external figure, other than the one

making the sacrifice, can assess and approve. "God testifying of his gifts . . ."

An Eternal Witness: A sacrifice which will continue to speak and resonate in time and in eternity long after the one who made it is dead ". . . And though he being dead still speaks".

Your sacrifice to your family must be excellent, in other words it must be a qualitative witness. Your sacrifice must also be huge in volume. In other words it must be a quantitative witness, one that is more than what you have ever offered before. Again you must have an internal witness that you have done well. This means you must learn to assess yourself. Have I treated my husband in the best way I can? Have I done all I could have done for our children? Am I holding back anything from my family merely because I feel it is my husband's responsibility to give it? If I were to honestly score myself according to God's divine parameters would I pass with excellence? What must I do to offer a more excellent sacrifice which I can honestly assess as indeed excellent?

Your sacrifice must also be assessed by people external to you. Men should see it and be able to glorify your Father who is in heaven. Ultimately, God Himself must testify of the spirituality of your gift or sacrifice. But perhaps the greatest parameter for judging your sacrifice is whether it will still speak in time and in eternity after you are dead. This is a big challenge if you must make an impact beyond the confines of time. How do you want to speak after you are dead? What legacy can you leave in your family that will perpetuate your good works and earn you rewards in eternity?

COUNSELLING AND PRAYER FOCUS

• Ponder and meditate on these questions.

• Pray about them.

• Tell God that you want to offer a more excellent sacrifice than you have ever offered before.

• Ask God to open up new avenues through which you can be a blessing to your husband and his generations.

• Tell God to multiply these avenues so that whatever you start in your family can be transplanted into the larger society or the global family.

• Write down seven ways you want to continue to speak in your family and in your nation even after you have died.

• Pray fervently about each of these seven ways and ask God to translate them into concrete visions that must be fulfilled before you die.

• Determine that from henceforth you will not just offer mere gifts but you will live a sacrificial life.

• Notice also that your decision not to just offer gifts but to live a sacrificial life will demand a higher level of consecration. This is because there is a huge difference between gifts and sacrifices.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GIFTS AND SACRIFICES

Don’t just offer gifts henceforth; make sacrifices. Gifts are good but sacrifices are better. One may give you an ordinary blessing while the other will yield to you a super abundant property (SAP).

For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices. Therefore it is necessary that this One also have something to offer. For if He were on earth,

He would not be a priest, since there are priests who offer the gifts according to the law (Hebrews 3-4).

1. A gift is often a limited offering; but a sacrifice is usually limitless.

2. A gift is the little you give out of the abundance you have; but a sacrifice is the abundance you give while retaining little or nothing for yourself.

3. A gift is often painless; but a sacrifice is usually painful.

4. A gift is like a surface scratch which does not really hurt; but a sacrifice is a deep bleeding wound.

5. A gift mainly touches the earth but a sacrifice reaches up to heaven.

6. A gift may touch the heart of man; but a sacrifice touches the heart of God.

7. A gift is like a still small voice; but a sacrifice is like a mighty rushing wind.

8. A gift is inferior to a sacrifice; and a sacrifice is superior to a gift.

9. A gift will do in a normal situation; but a sacrifice is what is needed in an abnormal circumstance.

10. A gift is what could be given in peace time; but a sacrifice is meant for the season of war.

And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force (Matthew 11:12).

11. A gift is a gentle offering; but a sacrifice is a violent offering.

12. A gift may settle a small problem; but a sacrifice is needed to deal with a chronic situation.

13. A gift will lead you to an arithmetical progression; but a sacrifice will bring you into a geometrical progression.

14. A gift is for those who wish to continue in toiling progress; but a sacrifice is for those who want to move into galloping progress.

15. Every sacrifice is a gift; but not every gift is a sacrifice.

God says that, ". . . every priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices". Gifts are good; but sacrifices are better than gifts. Consequently, God is telling you to move from gifts to sacrifices.

PLAYING THE ROLE OF A GATEKEEPER

This is the role of a priest which is directly related to his identification as a watchman. The priest is assigned the duty of "keeping charge of the sanctuary, to meet the needs of the children of Israel . . ." (Numbers 3:38).

As a gatekeeper you must be alive and alert. You must be sensitive and watchful. You are called to man the entry and exit points in your home. You cannot afford to be blind spiritually and you must not act like a dumb dog that cannot bark. You must hate slumber and sleep because these are inimical to your function as a watchman.

Remember that you and your husband are supposed to jointly play the role of gatekeeping in your home. Now that he is not fully prepared to take up his responsibility, the burden rests on you. There are lots of things you must not permit into your gates. These include music inspired by Satan, home videos and films that do not glorify God. There are lots of soap operas in this category—pornographic materials, alcoholic drinks, demonic art objects bought for the

purpose of decorations by certain individuals, including relations who clearly have diabolical plans against your family.

Since your husband may not be spiritually alert to identify some of these things for what they are, you must be as wise as a serpent, yet harmless as a dove in dealing with him. One woman fought with her husband over an art object she considered to be diabolical. She broke and burnt it in the fire without consulting her husband. He came back home only to see his wife setting “his precious ornament” on fire. The fight between them was so heated that the husband asked his wife to leave their home.

COUNSELLING AND PRAYER FOCUS

• Realize that we do not wrestle against flesh and blood but against principalities and powers.

• Ask God to open your eyes to whatever objects, animate and inanimate that passes through your gates.

• Take the battle to the gates. Lock up the feet of anybody with a diabolical plan who wants to pollute and defile your family.

• Ask God to open your husband’s eyes to see the spiritual realities around him. Tell God to divorce him from the demonic art objects which you want to destroy because of their origins and spiritual influences in your home.

• Get your husband’s permission before you remove or destroy any objects at home that have diabolical spiritual implications. It is also possible that the Spirit of God can lead you to destroy these objects without telling him. However, don’t be presumptuous like the woman whose story I told above.

• Pray that God will discourage your husband and your children from watching unhealthy home videos.

• If your husband is already hooked to pornography, ask God for the courage and compassion to confront and help him to kick the habit.

• Find out what he is really looking for in the ugly pictures of these naked women. See how you can give it to him in your bedroom. Show him that there is nothing right or good in pornography, but that there is everything bright and beautiful in you.

• Constantly sanctify your home and anoint your gates for protection from demonic infiltration. Where he refuses you to destroy a particular art object, anoint it with oil and nullify whatever influences may come through it. Trust that God will use your little effort to protect you and your entire family, including your ignorant husband.

• Study the biblical four watches in the day and four watches in the night. As much as possible practice praying according to these hours of prayer.

THE FOUR WATCHES OF THE DAY

WATCH	BEGINS	ENDS
1st Watch	6:00am	9:00am
2nd Watch	9:00am	12:00pm
3rd Watch	12:00pm	3:00pm
4th Watch	3:00pm	6:00pm

THE FOUR WATCHES OF THE NIGHT

WATCH	BEGINS	ENDS
1st Watch	6:00pm	9:00pm
2nd Watch	9:00pm	12:00 Midnight
3rd Watch	12:00 Midnight	3:00am
4th Watch	3:00am	6:00am

In Psalm 119:148 David said, “My eyes are awake through the night watches, that I may meditate on Your word”. And in Lamentation 2:19 Jeremiah commands us to “arise, cry out in the night, at the beginning of the watches. Pour out your heart like water before the face of the Lord. Lift your hands towards Him for the life of your young children, who faint from hunger at the head of every street.”

Where you find it too cumbersome to pray during all the watches, do your best to offer up some prayer but learn to concentrate on praying at midnight and midday. See my books on The Power of Praying at Midnight and The Power of Praying at Midday. You will find strategies for watching over your family at these two strategic gates of time.

DIAGNOSING LEPROSY IN THE FAMILY

This is the process of discerning when there is sin in any member of the family. Leprosy is a type of sin and it was the role of the priest to identify it and isolate whoever had become leprous (Leviticus 13:2-29).

There is a global pollution through the Internet which is defiling many innocent children from Christian homes. As far back as five years ago there were more than 72,000 obscene sites on the internet illegally posting incest, bestiality and mutilation.

1. Monitor your children when they use the internet.

2. Ensure that they do not go to the chat rooms where they can enter into conversations with paedophiles, Satanists or those offering assisted suicide on

the Internet.

3. Watch out for any strange things in your children. When children who were very outgoing suddenly become withdrawn and secretive, it is a sign that something could be wrong. When your sons and daughter begin to carry condoms and pills in their bags, know that they have become sexually active. When you notice marks on your children's hands and they are no longer coordinated in their thoughts or speech, know that it is possible they are involved in drugs.

COUNSELLING FOCUS

Beside these physical tit bits, you must ask God to activate your spiritual antenna to pick up signals on the state of your flock.

• Stop your children from watching violent films and movies where bloodshed and sex are graphically displayed.

• Get alternative Christian films that are lively, educative and even more entertaining than the heathen ones they like to watch.

• Find out who they keep as friends and encourage them to bring their friends home.

• Be certain of the kind of picnics and holiday camps your children attend. Make sure godly people are guiding them at these camps.

• Encourage your husband to put a little more effort in the upbringing of the children.

• Be careful to look out for any strange behaviours in your husband. When a man who always comes home early begins to stay out late without any convincing explanation, then something is obviously wrong. The same is true when he no longer eats at home regularly.

• Prayerfully find out the root of the problem and creatively confront him without sounding like a secret agent posted to do surveillance on him. Confront your husband with a view to helping him overcome whatever problem he may be facing.

• Avoid any confrontation at the wrong time. Make sure the Holy Spirit has expressly given you a go ahead before you confront him. Do it with a spirit of meekness, compassion and love.

• Remember that it is not all the time that you may have to confront your husband. Sometimes the Spirit of God may reveal something to you so you can pray for your husband's deliverance. Don't forget that a priest is divinely appointed by God in things pertaining to men. God raised you to intercede for your husband. He will sometimes give you sensitive information about him, not for the consumption of your friends, but for prayer purposes. Your role is not to proclaim his weak points but to persevere with God in prayer to rescue him from the miry clay.

BLESSING THE FAMILY

This is the ultimate function of the priest in the family—to bless. In Numbers 6:24-26, we see the priestly innovation of blessing which Moses commanded Aaron and his sons to proclaim over the nation of Israel.

The Lord bless you and keep you; The Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you; The Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace.

Notice that this priestly benediction was to be proclaimed upon Israel notwithstanding their stubbornness and rebellion. What does this imply? The role of a priest is to bless the people, even when they do not deserve this blessing. This is why you must turn your attention from the difficulties you've

had with your husband to seeing how you can be more of a blessing to him. As you bless him with a deep demonstration of agape love, he will one day rise up to the spiritual responsibilities expected of him. See your efforts today as part of seedtime. Keep hope alive that there will soon be a harvest. “Those who sow in tears shall reap in joy. He who continually goes forth weeping, bearing seeds for sowing, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him” (Psalm 126:5-6).

Chapter Thirteen

THE VERBALLY AND PHYSICALLY

ABUSIVE HUSBAND

Some men are like an active volcano that erupts every now and then. They could be cool and calm one moment and extremely violent at another. Living with them is like staying near a smouldering monster. They make you tense, on edge and constantly on guard. Some women do not know what they will say or do that will make their husbands erupt. The challenges of living with such men are great. Nevertheless, they are not insurmountable.

Rachel was a pastor's wife. She was respected and highly honoured, not just because of her status as the pastor's wife, but because she was a woman of integrity and great wisdom. Everyone who had a problem went to her and she had an answer to all their questions. Rachel was always cheerful. She seemed happy and contented, but she alone knew the traumatic battles she was facing at home.

Rachel's husband, a pastor, was not just a terror; he was the kind of man who could not tolerate any "opposition". Rachel was always branded "rebellious" and accused of lack of submission. She tried to cope with this challenge as much as she could. Not being the kind of woman who shared her family challenges with anyone, Rachel kept her problem to herself and coped with it as much as she could.

Rachel was a very intelligent woman. Nevertheless, her husband would sometimes call her a foolish woman over minor mistakes that anybody could have made. He was very aggressive and verbally abusive. One day things went out of hand. Rachel's husband came back home and wanted to eat immediately, but the meal was not ready because Rachel herself had returned home not too long ago from a visitation to a congregation member who had a new baby. She

appealed to him to be patient for a while. But he lashed out at her, accusing her of negligence. Every attempt to explain why the meal was delayed proved abortive. He was shouting and raging like a bull. Rachel continued to explain why there was a delay. At this point he got up, walked up to her, and without any warning, hit her on the face. Her eye glasses fell on the ground and were destroyed. Rachel ran into the bathroom only to discover that she was badly hurt in the eye. She had a black eye and had to wear sunglasses for more than a week to hide the marks of her husband's brutality. Rachel carried a heavy heart for months. She could not talk to any congregation member about what had happened, for fear of what further punishment her husband would inflict on her. Besides, she did not want to jeopardize her husband's ministry in the church where the members respected and called him "Daddy".

WIFE BATTERY: A GLOBAL PROBLEM

Domestic violence is a global problem. Women daily face traumatic experiences at the hand of men who claim to love them. The problem is not restricted to unbelievers; it is also prevalent amongst those who claim to be born again, as the story above shows. Even leaders in the nations are guilty of physically abusing their wives.

According to Lorry Lutz in Women as Risk-Takers for God, "At least 75 percent of refugees in the world are women and girls, fleeing war and violence. Approximately one quarter of the world's women are violently abused in their own homes. Some of the worst offenders are: Papua New Guinea: 60 percent abused; Thailand: 50 percent; Korea: 60 percent; Pakistan: 80 percent. In the United States, domestic violence is the biggest cause of injury to women—more than rape, road accidents and muggings combined. See P.33.

In 1996 almost two million girls around the world underwent female circumcision or genital mutilation. In Somalia up to 90 percent undergo the most

extreme form in which all external genital parts are cut off. The highest numbers of mutilations occur in Nigeria, Ethiopia, Egypt, Sudan and Kenya. Considered a rite of passage from girlhood to womanhood, circumcision is said to make girls desirable for marriage, ensure virginity, and keep them from sexual wrongdoing. It is practiced commonly by Muslims, though Muslim leaders would deny that they encourage or condone it.

PROFILE OF AN ABUSIVE HUSBAND

1. He is a bully who loves to practice his dangerous antics especially on women. He could be a typical coward when it comes to dealing with his fellow men.

2. He hates democracy and all its fine features of dialogue and compromise.

3. He is authoritarian and domineering.

4. His mouth has no spiritual muzzle.

5. He often talks before he thinks, and sometimes does not seem to think at all.

6. He is often unreasonable, argues foolishly and wants to win every verbal war.

7. He has a very low opinion of women and sees them as subordinates.

8. He feels intimidated in the presence of an intelligent, independent and articulate woman.

9. He is a master in the art of transferred aggression. Another man may offend him in his workplace and he will come home and take it out on his wife.

10. He could be cruel, emotionally aloof and seemingly uncaring.

11. He would suppress and oppress an intelligent wife and justify his actions based on the accusation that the wife is behaving like an ITK—I too know, someone who is all knowing.

12. He could be sarcastic, caustic and verbally mean.

13. He is dangerous wherever his verbal abuse is translated into physical violence.

14. He is self-conceited and self-opinionated.

15. He has a great capacity to hurt the children either physically, emotionally or spiritually.

Many women have had horrendous experiences at the hands of their husbands. Some have been so emotionally scared that they are like walking corpses. Others have been physically maimed. Yet others have died in the process. In Your Honeymoon Can Last Forever, I told the sad story of a pastor in Aba, a commercial town in Eastern Nigeria. He had a disagreement with his wife. An argument ensued and he slapped her. Unfortunately, she fell down and died right away. He ran away on seeing the consequences of his foolishness.

Some women have been in an abusive relationship for years. They feel so helpless that some have come to accept the unacceptable. They justify their husband's actions and even make unwarranted excuses for these violent men. How does a woman handle physical abuse from the very man who should protect her? Should she just sit there hoping that one day the situation would change? Does she invite the police and risk the twin problem of separation or divorce? What will happen to the children if this turns out to be the consequence of involving the law enforcement agencies? These are the innumerable questions that run through the mind of every woman suffering from domestic abuse. The fears these questions generate demobilize them into inaction. They sit back hoping that somehow things will change someday.

DON'T BE NAÏVE!

Problems do not disappear by your folding your hands and doing nothing. Hope, which is not based on godly action, is actually hopeless. This is why you must move quickly to deliver yourself from being permanently scared, maimed or even killed.

Rebuke the spirit of fear and timidity which has made you unable to address this problem of violence the way it should be. “For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the spirit of adoption by whom we cry, Abba Father” (Romans 8:15). You are not an orphan. You have a heavenly Father from whom you must draw the strength and courage to deal with domestic abuse.

DON’T BEHAVE LIKE AN OSTRICH

Reject every satanic ministration to adopt the ostrich mentality. The ostrich is an animal, but it pretends to be a bird. It has the gift of wings, but it does not bear the fruit of flying. The ostrich mentality is the attitude of people who pretend. They have a challenge to deal with but they pretend that all is well. They are given the gifts with which to deal with their problems but they choose alternatives that compound their situation.

In times of danger the ostrich digs the ground and hides its head in the earth, as if the danger will disappear by so doing. Imagine that a cobra is about to strike, but rather than run away, the ostrich digs the earth and puts its head therein, hoping that this is all the defense needed! The ostrich can run the distance of 130 kilometers in an hour. But rather than flee from danger, it chooses to hide its head in the sand. Your problem will not disappear when you hide your head in the sand. What you fail to confront today will confront you tomorrow. Ignoring your problem is not self-defense. Nor is it a self-preservation strategy.

One man began to beat his wife when they were courting. Unfortunately she excused this weakness believing that he would change after the marriage. Rather than the expected change, he became worse. Even so, this woman still would not deal with the situation until the day he hit her and blinded her eye. Today, she can only see with one eye. She is still married to the man, but they are merely enduring each other. Galatians 5:1 says, “Stand up therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ has set you free and no longer be entangled with the yoke of bondage”. Throw away your ostrich mentality. Ask for divine assistance to confront the issues in your marriage with the spirit of liberty, and not of bondage.

If you refuse to deal with the ostrich mentality, it will one day deal with you. You will find yourself manifesting all the other negative characteristics of the ostrich. Job 39:13 to 17 outlines these characteristics:

• Poor family sense.

• Poor instinct for preservation of posterity.

• Callousness toward tender offspring.

Most women who are physically abused by their husbands are afraid of losing their marriage. They are afraid of jeopardizing the life of their children by leaving. This truly is a big challenge. Yes, God hates divorce. But He also hates domestic violence. He hates it when a husband who is commanded to love his wife as Christ loved the church beats her as if she is an ordinary goat. He hates it when a man endangers the life of his wife through domestic violence. And to tell you a hard truth: God will rather have His daughters alive, though separated from their husbands, than dead because they have chosen to remain in an abusive relationship.

A woman who allows her husband to physically abuse her continuously is

unwittingly endangering her life and the life of her children. If your husband abuses you, then he can abuse anybody, especially your children. To tolerate domestic abuse for a long time would amount to “leaving your eggs in the ground and warming them in the dust”, like the ostrich. It would amount to forgetting that your husband’s foot may crush them or that another “wild beast” may break them.

PRAYER FOCUS

• Ask God to forgive you for using evasion to solve a problem that demands godly action.

• Pray for courage to lift up your head from out of the sand to confront the spirit of violence that seeks to destroy you and your marriage.

• Pray for wisdom and understanding to know what you must do. “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach and it will be given him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind” (James 1:5-6).

• Bind the spirit of doubt and wavering.

• Pray for your children, that your past inactions or dilly-dallying will not amount to “leaving them in the ground”, “warming them in the dust” and “treating them harshly, as though they were not yours”.

• Ask God for the divine ability to interpret your situation correctly. The Bible says they do not know, they don’t understand. They walk about in darkness. Therefore the foundations are out of course. Tell God that you really want to know what is happening to you and how to reshape your life that has been put out of course. Psalm 82:5.

• Declare that your labour for your husband and children will not be in vain. That God will make a way where there is no way.

Do whatever you can to save your marriage. Don’t be too proud to acknowledge that there are challenges you can’t handle on your own. Some women remember the big society wedding they had and all the people that attended, and feel that it would be a disgrace to tell anybody that their husband’s are abusive. Don’t wave your husband’s wings proudly and pretend that they are as loving and kind as those of the stock. “The wings of the ostrich wave proudly but are her wings and pinions like the kindly stocks?” Don’t pretend that your marriage is what it is not. Seek for help.

DIMENSIONS OF DOMESTIC ABUSE

AND HOW TO HANDLE THEM

There are different dimensions to domestic violence or abuse. Each dimension may need a different strategy to handle. The types of abuse include:

1. Verbal innuendos and attacks.

2. Emotional starvation.

3. Physical violence and domestic abuse.

4. Marital rape.

5. Sex withholding.

6. Denial of financial support.

7. Denial of property rights.

VERBAL INNUENDOS AND ATTACKS

This is different from the normal teasing you will find with husbands. It is neither play-acting nor is it enjoyable. On the contrary, a verbal innuendo is a deliberate attempt by a husband to upset his wife. It is a wicked effort to make her look stupid! It is usually sarcastic, offensive and capable of upsetting a woman's emotional balance.

Women are highly influenced by what they hear. To have a husband whose mouth and utterances are often on the wrong side of a woman's emotions could be a deep frustrating experience for any wife. One woman who was not feeling physically well was a bit slow in responding to her husband's demand for drinking water. Instead of finding out how she was feeling or indeed if she was alright, he lashed out at her, accusing her of behaving like a 100-year-old woman. This was not only irresponsible, but it was also painful.

Every woman desires to remain young and attractive. The appearance of wrinkles on a woman's face is usually a thing of worry and anxiety. For a woman to be told that she is behaving like an old woman when she is doing her best to meet the needs of her husband can be very traumatic.

Some husbands call their wives terrible names in moments of anger. It is not unusual for a man to tell his wife that she is stupid, useless or crazy. This is sometimes done in the presence of the children or even visitors. Nothing shames a woman like abusing her in the hearing of other people. It's damaging enough to be abused when you are alone with your husband, not to talk of when others are there. How do you deal with innuendos and verbal abuses? How do you respond to a husband who verbally tears you apart in the presence of your children?

COUNSELLING FOCUS

• Discover The Issues That Generate The Abuse And Try To Eliminate Them: A husband could be abusive when his meal is delayed. Why not do all you can to ensure that meals are served on time. I know the challenge is great for women who work outside the home. It is amazing that men who are married to working class women expect that their wives should go into the kitchen to prepare the meals when both of them returned from their workplaces at the same time. He goes to tune and watch T.V. or even lie down to relax while you are expected to enter the kitchen to prepare meals.

The challenge is great but you can meet it. Plan your meals ahead of time and get all it would take to prepare them within the shortest possible time. You could also get a house-help who could take off from you some of the burden of preparing meals. However, on no account should you completely relinquish your obligations to the house-help. Doing so will create another set of problems. Your husband could accuse you of neglect. He could also shift his loyalty and love to the house—help. It is said that the nearest way to a man's heart is through his stomach. There have been cases where men have abandoned their legitimate wives and married their house-helps. A man who became the Chief Judge of a province in an African Country impregnated his house-help, and eventually married her. The original wife left because she could not stand the shame. Don't try to solve one problem and create a different set of problems. The Bible says that there are certain things which the earth cannot bear: "A servant when he reigns; a fool when he is filled with food . . . and a maidservant who succeeds her mistress" (Proverbs 30:21-23).

• Allow The Truth To Set You Free From Verbal Abuse: There is a tendency to feel bad when someone you love and respect abuses you. You really don't mind if a stranger says an unkind word to you. Most people will just shrug their shoulders and move on. The situation, however, is more complicated and compounded if the abuse comes from someone mutually close. One often feels that this person should have known better. It is this feeling that makes most

people to run into the bathroom to cry or lie on the bed to nurse the hurt. The longer this continues the more depressed one feels.

At some point the devil makes you believe that you are really what your husband says you are. Some people by now believe a lie and go on to act out a self-fulfilling prophecy. Some people say, “Well since he thinks I am stupid, let me show him how truly stupid I am”.

Dora was accused of being unfaithful by her husband. He accused her of sleeping around with a man who works with her. This man was married and there was no intimate relationship between him and Dora. They just happen to work in the same office and shared many things in common. This was as far as their relationship went.

Unfortunately, Dora’s husband was unduly jealous and this led to suspicion and then false accusation. All the explanation and assurances Dora gave to her husband fell on deaf ears. This situation got to a climax one day when Dora’s car broke down on the road. Her colleague saw her stranded and naturally helped her get home, as would be expected. Dora’s husband saw her coming out of the car. No sooner did she get into the house than he called her a prostitute. Heart broken, Dora wept and could not be comforted. She even momentarily thought of going to bed with her colleague, since her husband dared to call her a prostitute.

You may have been falsely accused and verbally abused like Dora. Nevertheless, let the truth you know set you free. The Bible says that “you shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free”. This truth, first and foremost, is Jesus Christ; He is the truth personified. But it could also be the truth of a given situation or circumstance. Your husband may have called you a prostitute, but you know that you are not; and God also knows that you are not. This knowledge should set you free from pain and shame. It should set you free from the effect of verbal abuse from your husband or from any other person. To be depressed and

ashamed because someone says you did something which you did not do, will make you invoke sickness upon yourself. Even if you were forcibly thrown into prison on the basis of a false accusation, your knowledge of the truth should set you free from the spirit of bondage and bitterness. Your feet and your hands may be chained with fetters, but you can be at liberty with yourself. Joseph was accused of rape. He was thrown into prison, yet he was at peace with himself and God was at peace with him. Don't sit down and cry because your husband called you names which are not a true reflection of your God-given identity.

• Realize That Evil Communication Corrupts Good Manners: This realization will help you respond to your husband's abuses in a godly manner. Some women lash back at their husbands. They feel so insulted that their natural response is to insult him back. This is completely wrong. Do not allow your husband to sow an evil seed in your emotional womb. Shut your heart to his negative words. Don't allow evil to be conceived in you. And if you have already done so, abort it. Terminate the evil seed, so it does not gestate into full-term bitterness. For if it does, you could say and do worse things than your husband.

Some women get married with the temperament and disposition of a dove. They could hardly hurt a fly or say an evil word. Today, they quarrel with and abuse anyone who dares to cross their path. Why have such women changed? They changed because they allowed evil communication from their husbands to corrupt their good manners.

A woman does not just have a physical womb; she also has an emotional womb. Just as her husband sows the seed of a sperm into her physical womb, so he daily sows different kind of seeds into her emotional womb. Seeds sown into physical wombs are incubated for nine months and delivered not as seed or sperm, but as a miracle baby. In the same way, the evil words of a husband in his wife's emotional womb are incubated until they are delivered as counter-abuse. Thus the abused becomes the abuser and the circle of iniquity is thereby multiplied and perpetuated from person to person and from generation to generation.

Do not allow the evil communication of your husband to corrupt your good manners. Close your emotional womb to any unhealthy seed your husband may sow in it. Let the good seed of the word of God bear in you the fruitful harvest of holiness and righteousness.

EMOTIONAL STARVATION

Women are deeply emotional by nature. They are soft, tender and very sensitive. To deny a woman the very quality that partly defines her identity is to kill her before her time.

Emotional starvation by husbands is a crime against wives. Evidence of this crime can be found in a husband who:

1. Does not call his wife by a pet name.

2. Only hugs or touches her when he wants sex.

3. Keeps to himself and never unburdens how he feels to his wife.

4. Never tries to find out the welfare of his wife especially when she is moody, irritated or simply childish.

5. Finds it difficult to say “I love you” to his wife.

6. Does not minister to his wife when she is tired, pregnant or sick.

7. Knows the things that constitute his wife’s passion but is never passionate about them.

8. Never devotes any special time for the exclusive enjoyment of his wife, year in year out. In other words he never gives her a holiday.

Is this the profile of your husband? Was he always like this or did he only change recently? What have you done to deal with the problem? Have you simply nagged him to change and given up when he was not forthcoming?

Note that a man who emotionally starves his wife is responding to a foundation in his own life. Psalm 11:3 says, “If the foundation is destroyed what can the righteous do?” The righteous can rebuild this foundation. To undertake such a re-building project you must have a spiritual map of your husband’s past experiences. Is he an only child? Was he born out of wedlock? Is he a product of a polygamous home? Is he the product of an incestuous relationship? Did he grow up in a hostile, violent and abusive family? Was he raised in an orphanage?

Any answer to these questions in the affirmative will give you an indication of what you are contending with. Note that you are not just dealing with an aloof and emotionally sterile husband but with unhealthy influences in his past. Men with this type of background are sometimes unemotional, quiet and melancholic. They have had such a rough time that they fail to fully realize that they are hurting you in the same way they have been hurt. They are emotional Lilliputians who inadvertently or deliberately want to create emotional Pigmies out of their wives.

Marriage is a union of two opposites. God brought you into your husband’s life to help him. You have been demanding from your husband the qualities God put in you for his own benefit. It is in giving him what you were expecting from him that he can eventually give you back what he has gotten from you. “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35). But the husbandman is the first partaker of the fruits. The farmer first sows a seed, but he is the first to eat the harvest.

COUNSELLING AND PRAYER FOCUS

• Be diligent to find out the foundations of your husband.

• Bring detailed repentance on the series of abuses he suffered as a child. Take them one by one, precept upon precept, line upon line. Weep for your husband; raise a holy lamentation on his behalf.

• Confess your husband's sins and ask God to forgive him for becoming an abuser himself.

• Pray that God will equip you to give to your husband the emotional bonding and satisfaction you want him to give to you.

• Break the circle of emotional stuntedness in your children. Ask God to deliver them from the sin of their fathers. The Bible says that, "Our father's sinned and are no more and but we bear their iniquities" (Lamentations 5:7). Nevertheless, it also says that "This proverb shall not be used in Israel: "the fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge" (Ezekiel 18:2).

• Pray that the sour grapes eaten by your husband will not put your children's teeth on edge.

• Bind the ancestral spirits that have supervised and perpetuated these emotional problems from generation to generation. Sack them from your family. Give them quit notice and release the Heavenly Host of Angels to ensure that they indeed leave. What you bind on earth is bound in heaven, and what you loose on earth is loosed in heaven.

PHYSICAL VIOLENCE AND DOMESTIC ABUSE

Many women can survive emotional starvation, but few can withstand physical violence. Evil words may hurt you in the long run, but physical abuse has an immediate impact. Some women have died immediately after being hit by their husbands. In Brazil one man threw his wife out of a story building because she distracted his attention when he was watching a football match between Brazil

and another nation.

Proverbs 22:24-25 says, “Make no friendship with an angry man, and with a furious man do not go, lest you learn his ways and set a snare for your soul”. To protect themselves some women have learnt to fight back. One woman who lived with an abusive husband kept a gun by her bedside. She promised herself that she will kill him the next time he hit her. Another woman broke a bottle and stabbed her husband in the presence of her daughter. The man had grabbed her throat and was almost suffocating her before she grabbed the only weapon available to her.

The temptation to use violence to deal with violence is very appealing when you are too vulnerable. But don’t forget how Jesus responded to a similar challenge. On the day he was arrested to be crucified a mob armed with knives, clubs and other dangerous weapons accosted Jesus at the garden of Gethsemane. They were pushing and shoving Him when one of his disciples decided to respond to their effrontery. He pulled a sword and chopped off the ears of the High Priest’s servant. Jesus simply picked up the severed portion of the man’s ears and glued it back on him. He then rebuked his violent disciple saying:

. . . Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Or do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me more than twelve legions of angels? How then could the scriptures be fulfilled that it must happen thus (Matthew 26:52-54).

Jesus died violently that the scriptures would be fulfilled. With you there is no such scripture to be fulfilled. There is nothing in the Bible that says you should sit back and let your husband club you to death. Neither does the Bible permit you to respond to his violent antics with violence of your own. The instruction from the Master is, “Put your sword in its place”, because all who depend on the sword will perish by the sword. “We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against spiritual wickedness in high

places . . .” Every wife beater is ruled by the spirit of violence. He is controlled by the invisible spirit of death and hell.

COUNSELLING FOCUS

• Don’t wait for him to beat you more than two or three times before you take action against him. You may not live to tell your story if you wait for too long. You are fully justified to say your husband made a mistake the first time he beats you. But surely, two or three times cannot be a mistake. In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall a word be established. Realize sooner than later that you are married to a sick man that needs a “doctor’s” urgent attention.

• That “doctor” could be your local church pastor; but he could also be a policeman or a lawyer. But please hold on yet with the police “doctor” and the lawyer. I will tell you when it is time to go to them. First go to your pastor, or any other opinion leader your husband respects. It could be his friend; it could be his father or mother. However, avoid going to his family members or yours, except as a last resort. Such people are sometimes too close and involved in the case to offer rational or godly counsel. You should only go to them when you are convinced that they have the capacity to solve your problem.

• Ask for God’s guidance to know who to go to.

• Make sure you go to someone who will not compound your problem. If you don’t have confidence in your pastor, there is no point in going to him merely because he is your overseer. I know pastors who do not have the moral courage to rebuke their errant parishioners. One pastor failed to discipline one of his elders who was fond of beating his wife because he was a big financial supporter of the church. Another pastor kept on dilly-dallying over a matter of domestic violence until one husband broke his wife’s head. Such pastors are of little use to you. So don’t bother going to them. Save your energy and your time. Look somewhere else for help. On the other hand, a true pastor with moral courage will warn your husband the first time he beats you, suspend him the second time and probably excommunicate him the third time if he remains obstinate. A pastor with moral courage will give him godly counsel, take him through deliverance

and psychological therapy and send him to a professional psychologist when he deems it fit. Such a pastor will genuinely pray for the restoration of your husband and help you to monitor his level of repentance. If this does not describe your pastor, then be careful of the type of advice you get from him. You may go to him for counsel on any other issues but not on this matter of domestic violence.

• Seek for help, not with the mind of punishing your husband, but with the heart of reconciliation. See yourself as a minister of reconciliation. Your primary objective should be to reconcile your husband back to God. You can't do it without the guidance of the word of reconciliation. Neither can you do it without the cleansing power of the blood of Jesus, by which all things are reconciled back to God. Plead the blood of Jesus upon your husband. See yourself as an ambassador of Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:18-21 says:

And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

MARITAL RAPE

This was not seen as a social or legal problem until recently. Indeed many men, especially in traditional societies, will view it as a laughable matter to suggest that a married man can rape his wife.

Women are sometimes regarded as the property of their husbands—to be used in any way the man deems fit. This perception of one's wife is unfortunate. It

would seem to be the platform upon which modern men have tended to violate their wives sexually. A drunken husband could beat up his wife and force her into having sex with him. In these days of the HIV/AIDS problem the matter of marital rape must be viewed with greater seriousness. This is because an infected man could force his wife to have sex with him without using a condom. We shall later discuss these issues in the chapter on how to “beat” a husband who is HIV-positive.

What does a woman do when her husband’s physical abuse is translated into rape? What should be the appropriate response? Rape is a traumatic experience when it is marital rape. Some people have termed a husband’s sexual violation of his wife as friendly rape. But there is no such thing as a friendly rape. There are many things rape does to a woman.

CONSEQUENCES OF RAPE

1. It insults a woman’s sense of independence.

2. It demeans her self-worth and significance.

3. It engenders in her a hatred for men and sex.

4. It creates emotional instability and fear.

5. It leaves a scar which manifests in unhealthy sexual relationships even with a man she willingly yields to.

6. It creates a trauma that limits a woman’s capacity to trust anybody.

7. It hinders her ability to fulfill her life’s assignment or purpose.

8. It pollutes her reproductive gates and thereby negatively affects the seeds that pass through them.

9. It leads to unwanted pregnancies and childbirth which complicates the joys of motherhood as well as childhood.

10. It leads many women to commit abortion which they may not have committed under normal circumstances.

11. It could be a means for the transmission of HIV and any other venereal disease.

12. It causes physical damage to a woman's sexual organs, through the wear and tear resulting from the use of force.

13. It fuels the gender war between men and women and gives ultra-feminists the justification to promote and perpetuate this war.

14. It transfers ancestral spirits and perpetuates sexual bondage from generation to generation. A child born out of rape would have serious foundational problems, which can only be overcome through repentance and restitution.

COUNSELLING FOCUS

There is no justification whatsoever for marital rape. However, a wife can avoid it by playing her conjugal role to her husband without hesitation. 1st Corinthians 7:4-5 says, "The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Do not deprive one another except for a time that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control".

Seek for help from a trusted pastor or counsellor where you have done your part and your husband violates you sexually. Go preferably to a female pastor. She should be in a position to empathize with you. You could also talk with a male pastor who is trusted and who has the moral authority to counsel and discipline your husband.

WHEN YOU MUST GET A LAWYER OR

CALL THE POLICE

When your husband is an alcoholic and he has beaten and raped you after being warned and disciplined by your pastor or someone in authority over him, then it's time to get the law enforcement agents involved. Most women are very reluctant to go this far. Some suffer abuse for years. Others even get hurt and they still will not involve the police. Sometimes this is because they still love their husbands. At other times it is because they are afraid that going to the police will aggravate his violent tendencies. Women who are completely dependent on their husband's for financial support are afraid of losing out, especially if he is imprisoned. They are afraid of how they would cope financially with the children. These are legitimate concerns, but they should not override the need for common sense when your life is in danger. Ecclesiastes 9:4 says that a living dog is better than a dead lion. While there is life, there is hope. But there is no repentance or a second chance in the grave.

Don't go to the police to repay your husband evil for evil. No! Go to the police because you see a man who needs help. You could even make a private arrangement with a friendly policeman telling him that your motive for effecting the arrest is not only to safeguard your life but to help your husband to reform. You could get the police to just give him a firm caution, instead of sending him immediately to the courts for trial. Tell the police to make your husband write an undertaking that he would never beat you again and that he would go for rehabilitation. Your husband may not agree to go for rehabilitation if you made that suggestion to him. But the fear of prosecution and the subtle coercion from any family-friendly policeman could do the trick.

Tell your husband in the presence of the police that you love him and that you want his best and the best of the family. Follow him to the rehabilitation centre

and, where possible, join him in the work-outs. This is just to prove to him that you are not seeking his downfall but his elevation. You need a combination of tenderness and toughness to achieve your desired objective. Above all, you need the grace of God that comes through aggressive prayer combined with aggressive love. It is easy to be bitter against your husband for all he has done to you. But you must reject bitterness, because it only leads to emotional barrenness.

WHEN "SEPARATION" IS THE NEXT LINE

OF ACTION

If you have done everything outlined above and the beating and violence continues, then a new line of action is indispensable, especially if your life is in danger. Remember that a living dog is better than a dead lion. You are neither a living dog, nor a dead lion. But if for any reason you had to choose between the two, I would rather you chose to be a living dog than a dead lion.

One woman had the traumatic experience of being tied to the bed and raped by her husband anytime he came home too drunk for the wife to accept sexual relations with him. He is a huge man while she is a petite woman. He threatened to kill her many times, and sometimes he pulled a gun at her. He would rape her and then beg for forgiveness. He would promise never to do it again, but his promises were like the campaign promises of a crooked politician. He never kept them after the "election". So this woman suffered a circle of physical violence, rape and verbal abuse or sustained degradation.

He could have killed her if she had not one day decided to leave the home. True, God hates divorce and we all must hate what God hates. But separation is not divorce. It is only a temporary solution to the problem of domestic violence when a woman is in danger of being killed by her husband. I am not by any way

advocating that women having challenges with their husbands should divorce them. Far from it. But it would be stupid, biblically unsound and even criminally liable for any one to advise a woman to remain in the same house with a violent and abusive husband who has the capacity of beating or clubbing her to death.

However, don't see separation as an end, but a means to an end. That end should not be divorce but the reformation and restoration of your husband. There have been instances when a woman left an abusive husband for a while and this created the avenue for him to reconsider his actions. Such families have been reunited and the men completely reformed. For this to be your testimony you must be ready to travail for the deliverance of your husband. You must be willing to love the unlovable. You must be ready to give him a second chance once he shows genuine proof of repentance. This often comes when a husband gives his life to Christ and begins to walk in the paths of righteousness.

SEX WITHHOLDING

This is a form of emotional torture. It is an abuse which has led many women to commit adultery. It is common in polygamous homes. But it is also there in monogamous relationships where husbands have concubines who satisfy their sexual needs. Such husbands deny their wife sex to punish them. This is especially so where these men know their wives to be women of integrity who will not dare have sex with any other men other than their husbands.

The only example of this form of abuse can be found in Genesis 30:14-16:

And Reuben went in the days of wheat harvest, and found mandrakes in the field, and brought them unto his mother Leah. Then Rachel said to Leah, Give me, I pray thee, of thy son's mandrakes. And she said unto her, Is it a small matter that thou hast taken my husband? and wouldest thou take away my son's mandrakes

also? And Rachel said, Therefore he shall lie with thee tonight for thy son's mandrakes. And Jacob came out of the field in the evening, and Leah went out to meet him, and said, Thou must come in unto me; for surely I have hired thee with my son's mandrakes. And he lay with her that night.

You can see that Leah adopted a carnal solution to solving a purely spiritual problem. She used her son's mandrakes as a bargaining chip to get Jacob to go to bed with her. She practically hired her husband to have sex with her. This amounted to inviting the spirit of prostitution into a legitimately constituted marital relationship. It's only in prostitution that you hire someone to have sex with. A wife should not be hiring her husband to go to bed with her.

How then do you deal with the problem of sex-withholding from your husband?

COUNSELLING FOCUS

• Make yourself so attractive to him that he will have no option than to come to you.

• Dress "provocatively" whenever it is time to go to bed and please show off about it. After all, you are not dealing with a stranger but with your legitimate husband.

• Do a mini-bikini fashion parade night. Yes, do it for your husband. There is nothing ungodly about doing so, provided it is only for the sole viewing pleasure of your husband.

• Pray and deal with any strange woman that has diverted his attention from you. Ask God to put a divine attraction for you in him.

• Be nice to your husband. Put your eyes on the things he is passionate about. Notice that Jacob was passionate about Rachel. He loved her more than Leah. It

was a fertility enhancing fruit called mandrakes that Leah gave to her. Prior to this time Rachel had no children. Jacob therefore desired that the one he loved would became fruitful. Thus even though he was no longer sexually attracted to Leah, he was compelled to have sex with her, because Rachel had an interest in getting the mandrakes which belonged to her senior sister. Leah may have done the wrong thing by hiring her husband to have sex with her; but she used a creative tactics to solve her problem. She used what her husband loved to get what she needed.

Maybe your husband is passionate about football; use it to lure him back to bed. Maybe he is passionate about his business; get a little more interested in his business. As you become passionate about the things he is passionate about you will kindle a new sexual passion in him for you. Use what he loves to get what you want.

DENIAL OF FINANCIAL SUPPORT AND

PROPERTY RIGHTS

Some husbands are so domineering that they stop their wives from doing anything to earn a living. This is wrong, especially when the same men refuse to support their wives financially. Whether a woman is working or not she should be supported by her husband. To leave a woman without an income or financial support is manipulative and cruel. No woman should agree to such manipulation. This is why every woman must have something doing that gives her an income independent of whatever she gets from her husband.

There can be no women empowerment without employment. A woman who has no job from which she earns an income outside home keeping is a potential target for an abusive husband to manipulate.

COUNSELLING FOCUS

• Identify the areas you have skills in and see how you can translate them into income generating ventures.

• Determine to be independent of man but completely dependent on God.

• Become financially literate. Buy shares in viable companies and stock exchanges and let your money work for you.

• There is nothing wrong with investing in properties if you have the resources to do so. Every woman has a right to own property just like every other man. You are not just an appendage to a man merely because you are married to him. If he refuses to agree with the scriptures that everything that belongs to him belongs to you also, don't sit back there looking up to an ungodly husband. The Bible does not say, "looking unto your husband the author and finisher of your faith". On the contrary it says, "Looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of your faith".

• Don't however be arrogant and proud once you become financially independent. Continue to honour and submit to your husband. Help him out whenever he has a need.

• Include your husband in your Will even if he does not include you in his. "Do unto others what you would want them to do to you". This is the golden rule. Make sure you are ruled by the golden rule. This is the only way God will bless and prosper you more and more.

Chapter Fourteen

THE HUSBAND WHO IS ON DRUGS AND IS HIV POSITIVE

The challenges of dealing with a family member who is a drug addict are enormous. These challenges are even greater when the person is your husband and in addition to being a drug addict he is also HIV-positive.

Grace Kithaka, in an article, “Living With a Drug Addict”, published in the Daily Nation, a Kenyan Newspaper of November 24, 2004 posed two fundamental questions about drug addicts and their family relationships. “What do you do if you know there is a thief in your house? Call the police to arrest and charge him, of course. But what if the thief is your own brother who is constantly stealing things from your house to finance his drug habit?”

It is even easier to deal with a brother than a husband. What if the drug addict is your husband? What if he is the kind of man who does not just steal from you to finance his habit, but has begun to sell the family property you jointly worked for to purchase drugs? What if, he has begun to misbehave so much that the children are becoming afraid to go near to him? What if in addition to his drug problem, you now suspect that he is HIV-positive? How should a woman respond to these critical challenges? Before we answer these questions let us examine the backgrounds of the drug and HIV problems.

THE DRUG AND HIV PROBLEMS

The drug problem has always been around although it has been aggravated in recent years. The HIV problem, on the other hand, came into focus in 1981 when the virus was first identified in the United States of America. Since then, millions of people have died of this scourge. Africa, more than any other continent, seems to be the hardest hit. At the first United Nations General

Assembly dedicated to the Global AIDS Pandemic held on 24th June 2001, the following statistics were unveiled:

• 70% of those infected with HIV were Africans.

• 80% of sufferers were women and children.

• 16 million out of 22 million people who had died of AIDS by 2001 were Africans.

• 13 million AIDS orphans were recorded globally; Kenya alone by this time had 1 million AIDS orphans.

• By the year 2000 about 6,000 people died daily in sub-Saharan Africa alone.

• There were about 10,000 daily infections in Africa.

• By 2001, there were 5 million people living with HIV/AIDS in South Africa and 47% of the population of Botswana was HIV-positive.

These grim figures made Kofi Annan, UN Secretary General, to declare that the HIV/AIDS Pandemic needed “an extraordinary response” to be combated. He called for the setting up of a $17 billion global fund to combat the problem.

The latest reports on the HIV problem does not seem to be better despite the huge sums injected into research, campaigns and public enlightenment on how to stem the tide of this deadly disease. A UN report released in Nairobi in November 2004 titled “AIDS Epidemic Update” declared that 2003 was the worst AIDS year”. While in 2002 the rate of infection was 36 million, in 2003 it climbed to 39 million. This was so notwithstanding the fact that there was an awareness rate of 95%.

The life expectancy rate has dropped dangerously to 40 years in Zambia, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Botswana, Rwanda, Zimbabwe and Central African Republic (Daily Nation, November 24, 2005 p.5). Entire families and even villages are being wiped out by the HIV problem, which is closely related to the challenges posed by drugs. Even entire tribes are in danger of extinction. In the process of using unsterilized needles, which are shared, drug addicts are increasingly being infected by HIV. Suppose your husband is addicted to drugs; suppose he is HIV-positive. How should you deal with these challenges?

KNOW THE SYMPTOMS OF DRUG USE

Knowledge, they say, is power, especially when it has the ability to safeguard your life. In her Daily Nation article of 24th November 2004, Grace Kithara outlines the symptoms of drug use identified by Tabitha Murungu, a Nairobi-based counsellor. These are:

• Stealing: The act of taking items from home to sell in order to get money to fund the drug habit.

• Withdrawal: The process of cutting off from healthy relationships into self-imposed isolation.

• Unexplained Absences: The act of disappearing at odd times, sometimes for days or weeks, apparently to cultivate the habit without a close relation discovering it.

• Personal Anonymity: The state of becoming so depersonalized that nobody can say much about your character, personality, likes or dislikes.

• Shady Associations: The action of having friends who are never really known by family members and who are also probably drug addicts.

• Volatile Temperament: The state of displaying a raging anger, which is often sparked off by issues that other normal people will respond to with calm and

reasonableness.

• Bad Personal Hygiene:The condition of never being able to take care of one's self in basic things like taking a bath, having a haircut or brushing one's teeth.

• Victim Mentality: The condition of never being able to take responsibility for failures, which leads to always blaming others for one's problems.

To these symptoms identified by Murungu we can add the following:

• Loss Of Interest For Spiritual Things: This leads to withdrawal from fellowships or attendance at prayer meetings or church services.

• A Tendency To Overreact: This is caused by the side effects of drug use. There is an unnatural hunger that is generated in the drug addict, which could make him or her consume twice as much food as he or she would naturally consume.

• A Rejection Of Parental Responsibility: This is a natural consequence of losing control of one's discipline. A man that cannot take care of himself, of course, cannot take care of his wife or children.

• A Tendency To Be Promiscuous: This is also a natural consequence of drug use. Most drug addicts become too careless and overtly experimental about sex. This is how they are further exposed to HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases.

• A Tendency To Be Constantly Sick: This is because their bodies are under the barrage of the poisonous substances they put into them.

• Loss Of Intellectual Capacity: This leads to withdrawal from academic programmes without any genuine reasons. The mental capacity to retain knowledge is lowered and interest in academics dries up.

RESPONDING TO THESE SYMPTOMS

The natural response to a drug addict with these symptoms by family members is rejection. Most people would want such a person arrested for stealing and if possible imprisoned. But is that what you desire for your husband? Will his imprisonment solve the problem? May be it will for a while, but he will eventually be released and become probably worse than before his incarceration.

Drug addicts can be problematic as their profile above shows. They may steal your jewelry and sell them to fund their drug habit. One husband even sold his wife's engagement and wedding rings to a neighbour. The rings had disappeared mysteriously and his wife could not exactly account for how they disappeared. She was shocked to see them on the hand of her neighbour at a Christmas party for residents in her neighbourhood. She nicely confronted her neighbour who told her that her husband had sold the rings to her. He lied to her that he was into buying and selling of jewelry from England.

How do you deal with a husband who steals and sells his own property? How do you respond to his withdrawal syndrome, his unexplained absences, his shady associations or his bad personal hygiene?

COUNSELLING AND PRAYER FOCUS

• Realize that every drug addict is a sick person that needs the help of concerned friends and relatives.

• Assume that you are dealing with an emotionally unstable person rather than a rational and stable personality. This will help you to empathize with your husband rather than seek to punish him for the many ways he has troubled you.

• Compassionately identify with his problems so that God can give you wisdom on what to do to assist him.

• Search out for a reliable rehabilitation center where your husband can be sent for treatment.

• Mobilize your entire family to begin a round the clock prayer watch for your husband. The involvement of the entire family is indispensable for his quick recovery.

• Also mobilize your local church "family" to stand in the gap for your husband. Some women for shame fail to get their pastors or church members involved in dealing with family challenges. But this is why they are there. There is a friend that sticks closer than a brother. Use such friends. They will be more than able to help you if indeed they are friends.

• Deal with your husband's drug problem from the holistic point of view. This means seeking for medical, social, spiritual and psycho-therapeutic solutions to his problems. A combination of all these approaches cannot fail.

• Above all, remember the marital vows you made at the altar—"for better, for worse, in sickness and in health". This is the time to fulfil that vow. Drug problems are difficult to deal with, but they are not insurmountable.

• Pray for your husband upon the authority of Jeremiah 30:16-19: "Therefore all they that devour thee shall be devoured; and all thine adversaries, every one of them, shall go into captivity; and they that spoil thee shall be a spoil, and all that prey upon thee will I give for a prey. For I will restore health unto thee, and I will heal thee of thy wounds, saith the LORD; because they called thee an Outcast, saying, This is Zion, whom no man seeketh after. Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will bring again the captivity of Jacob's tents, and have mercy on his dwelling places; and the city shall be builded upon her own heap, and the palace shall remain after the manner thereof. And out of them shall proceed thanksgiving and the voice of them that make merry: and I will multiply them, and they shall not be few; I will also glorify them, and they shall not be small".

• First bring repentance on your husband's behalf for substance abuse.

• Ask God to forgive him for the ungodly things he has done to you and his children.

• Call on God to devour the things that have devoured his body. Bind the spirit behind each of the symptoms outlined above. Take them one by one and deal

with them specifically.

• Send all your husband's adversaries, every one of them into captivity.

• Ask God to plunder the spiritual forces that seek to plunder your husband.

• Pray that God will prey upon the unhealthy appetite for drugs that has preyed upon your husband.

• Call on God to restore his health and heal him of all his wounds whether physical, emotional, mental and spiritual.

• Pray that the Lord will deliver your husband from the spirit of a vagabond and the things that have made him an outcast.

• Pray that out of your husband's life shall proceed thanksgiving because of God's mercy and grace.

DEALING WITH A HIV-POSITIVE HUSBAND

This is particularly a traumatic experience. Nevertheless God's grace can surmount any difficulty there is in handling the challenges posed by HIV.

Given the fact that 80% of HIV/AIDS cases are contacted through sexual intercourse, it is most likely that your husband may have contacted the virus through extra-marital sex. His unfaithfulness to you and the possibility that you too could be infected generates bitterness against him that only God can help you overcome.

Where a wife suspects that her husband is unfaithful to her, it is imperative to lovingly confront him and request that his HIV serostatus should be determined. This is not always easy in African societies because of the gender problems

women have. One husband slapped his wife because of what he called her temerity to suggest that he could be HIV positive and should therefore go for a test. This husband's behaviour is unfortunate.

Nevertheless, a wife has a right to know her husband's HIV status. No woman should ever be intimidated by a husband who is not faithful and yet would not want to check out his HIV status. Failure to know your husband's status could spell doom for you. Tender toughness is demanded in dealing with this problem. Wisdom is also required.

In the case reported in the Daily Nation of July 19, 2004, a pastor in the Kisii area of Kenya had his manhood chopped off by his wife. He had suspected that his wife was unfaithful to him while he was in a theological college. When he came back home he refused to give his wife her conjugal rights on the grounds that he wanted them to ascertain their HIV status. According to the pastor, "I declined her advances telling her to hold on until we ascertained our HIV status". This suggestion did not go down well with his wife. "She refused to heed my advice, leading to a struggle. I took a mat and slept on the floor, letting her sleep on the bed. I slept with my clothes on. But at 3:00 a.m, I found myself naked", the pastor reported. He was not just naked but bleeding in a pool of his own blood. It took the neighbours to rush him to a hospital where he was treated.

If a woman could respond the way this pastor's wife did to the mere suggestion that they both ascertain their HIV status before having sex, you can imagine how a man would respond when the suggestion is made by his wife. The story of the pastor whose manhood was chopped off by his wife should, however, not scare you from requesting that your husband's HIV status must be ascertained especially when you suspect that he is not sexually faithful to you. It should rather encourage you to be more careful and apply ultimate wisdom in making this request. Your life is not worth risking because of one man's profligacy.

Even before you ask your husband to ascertain his HIV status find out your own

status first. Don’t just sit back in the dark, not knowing where you stand.

THE STORY OF MARTHA OF MAMELODI

This story is told by Andre E. De La Porte in HIV/AIDS And The Curriculum edited by Musa W. Dube. Martha was anxious about her HIV status because Herbert her husband was not faithful to her. She was afraid to discuss the HIV issue with him. Martha talked with her pastor whose response to her anxieties created more concerns in her heart. “He said that Herbert was a respected member of the congregation, and she should not shame him by suggesting that he had AIDS”. She initially resigned herself to her situation. She became withdrawn and depressed. She thought that confronting Herbert amounted to lack of respect and submission. She eventually summoned courage to seek further counsel from her parents. Martha’s parents were wise counsellors and they encouraged her to lovingly confront Herbert. “Gradually Martha saw that she had to submit to her husband in what was right and proper and not necessarily in all things. Martha realized that she had a responsibility towards herself, Herbert and her children”.

Martha eventually confronted Herbert without the initial anxieties she had felt. She first tested herself and discovered that she was HIV-negative. She told Herbert that he must get tested or else she will take the children and return to her parents’ home in Hammanskraal. Herbert was furious and he hit her.

Martha did not despair even though she was afraid. She made good her threat and left for her parents’ home. She later wrote Herbert a letter telling him that he could come and see her there once he is tested. Martha also made him know that she would “stay with him even if he was HIV-positive”. However, she would not come back home until he had done the test. (Andre E. De La Porte: Hopeful Compassion: Spiritual care for the person living with HIV/AIDS in Theological Programme. Pp 122-142, A WCC Publication, Switzerland, 2003).

In this story, Andre E. De La Porte tried to expose the dangerous theological trap in which many Christian women find themselves. They believe that submission to their husbands demands the acceptance of obviously unacceptable things. He tried to illustrate the need for biblically sound counsel for women married to husbands who are sexually unfaithful. More importantly, he was drawing our attention to the fact that a woman's submission to her husband should not exclude responsibility to herself and accountability to God.

Many irresponsible husbands have jeopardized the lives of their wives and vice versa. This probably will not be the case if these women took responsibility for themselves and were willing to be tough yet tender like Martha in the above story. Notice that she was willing to remain loyal to her husband not withstanding his HIV status. She was willing to discuss how they would handle the situation even if her husband was HIV-positive.

BALANCING RESPONSIBILITY FOR SELF WITH COMPASSION FOR A HIV-POSITIVE HUSBAND

One of the biggest challenges HIV-positive people face is stigmatization. It is bad enough when it comes from outsiders. But it is worse when it is done by family members. Joseph did a routine HIV test in his office and found that he was HIV-positive. He felt obligated to tell his wife. This decision unfortunately became his undoing. Mary, Joseph's wife, could not stand the sad news. She packed out with all the children the next day when Joseph went to the hospital to get treatment. She carried every valuable thing they had struggled to gather in 20 years of marriage. She did not even leave a note to indicate where she had gone. Joseph was not only heart broken, but he also became depressed. Without family support he died a few years later. It was even difficult to get people who would bury him. No family member came to his hastily organized funeral, not even his wife and three children.

The first patients diagnosed to be HIV-positive suffered untold hardship. They were stigmatized, isolated and discriminated against. Some were sacked from their work places and abandoned by their families. Others died before their time not just because they had no access to the life prolonging anti-retroviral drugs available today but because of loneliness, the loss of hope and abandonment. Although things are changing gradually, stigmatization of HIV patients is still a major problem.

Sofia Gruskin called our attention to a new kind of hate-crime in the world today. This involves “attacks on people because of an illness”. These attacks are aggravated because of the moral issues associated with confronting the HIV infection. True, moral issues like infidelity, perverted sex, prostitution and the like, should never be swept under the carpet. Nevertheless, once an individual contacts the virus because of a moral failure, this should never be used as a ground for punishing him. We should not further break a broken reed. We should minister the comfort and compassion of Christ on all those suffering from the HIV scourge. We have a responsibility to share the love and compassion of Christ while carefully directing people to make better life prolonging choices according to the dictates of God’s righteousness.

COUNSELLING AND PRAYER FOCUS

• Ask God’s grace to overcome the initial shock of learning that your husband is HIV-positive.

• Determine to be better informed and more aware of the HIV/AIDS problem. Get literature to read.

• Reject every temptation to stigmatize and abandon your husband no matter how he contacted the virus.

• Ask God to make you an extension of His comfort, compassion and loving care

to your husband and others who are HIV-positive.

• Tell God to give you the strength to turn the mess in your family into a ministry with a powerful message of agape love. Stand upon the word. “All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28).

• Discuss with your husband how you can protect yourself from being infected. This is a real challenge but it can be met.

• Realize that there are many things you can still share with your husband without the possibility of his transferring the virus to you. These include:

A kiss

A handshake

A hug

Use of same towel

Sleeping on the same bed

• Call upon God to deliver you from irritation, fears and superstitions associated with living with a HIV-positive person.

• Protect your husband’s HIV status from family members and friends who are prone to stigmatizing HIV-positive people.

• Avoid blame hunting if you discover that you too are HIV-positive. This would be diversionary and capable of embittering you. Concentrate on living and making the best use of the time available to you.

• Seek out the relevant anti-retroviral drugs which are becoming more and more available at reasonable prices in many nations.

• Become a HIV/AIDS counsellor to your husband and others who may share his problem.

• Ask God to prepare you for the ultimate demise of your husband. Get him to focus his attention on making peace with God rather than worrying on how you and the children will fare when he is no longer around. This will not be easy, but God will give you the courage and strength to be a pillar of strength at this time of need.

• Get ready to become the bread winner for the family when your husband becomes too weak to work or when he is at the terminal stage of his illness. Develop an income plan, an expenditure strategy, and investment proposal you can share with your husband.

• Enforce respect and tolerance for your husband in your children. Teach them to honour their father irrespective of the predicament facing him. Ephesians 6:1-3 says, “Children obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honour your father and mother, which is the first commandment with a promise that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth”.

THE CHALLENGES OF SEX WITH A

HIV-POSITIVE HUSBAND

This is a big challenge, especially when the woman is HIV-negative. There is always a fear that a wife can contact the virus from her husband. This is only possible where you don’t know the HIV status of your husband and so have made no provision to protect yourself. But once you know his status and

adequate provision has been made, there should be no fear whatsoever. It is true that “AIDS is more than an infected body; it usually has to do with infected relationships” (Andre E. De La Porte, p134). This reality reconfigures the relationship between a husband who is positive and his wife who is negative. However, an infected body does not have to create an infected relationship. A husband may be infected, but the wife and even the baby in her womb can be shielded from infection.

THE STORY OF TIMOTHY

Again this story is told by Andre E. De La Porte. Timothy was a medical doctor of 33 years old. He first contacted a sexually transmitted disease when he was in the university studying to be a medical doctor. This was apparently dealt with and he eventually graduated from medical school with honours.

Timothy gave his life to Christ and was well known as a Christian leader. He loved and cared for people. He demonstrated this love through service to mankind and the preaching of the gospel. Timothy eventually fell in love with another Christian sister to whom he made a marriage proposal. “The day before his wedding he found out he was HIV-positive. He was in shock, and greatly embarrassed. His fiancée decided to marry him even though he was HIV-positive in order to prove her true love”.

Encouraged by this demonstration of love by his fiancée, now wife, Timothy plunged into work, serving all and sundry as best as he could. His wife provided the emotional, physical and spiritual support that kept him going. He helped build up a big and beautiful medical centre. As he worked, his body became weaker and weaker as a result of his HIV/AIDS status. This did not completely stop him from working tirelessly for the hospital he helped to transform. He eventually became so sick that he could no longer work the way he used to.

Timothy was not alone in his struggle with AIDS. His elder brother and one other brother were also HIV-positive. Timothy believed God for his elder brother's salvation. He shared the gospel with him and mobilized prayer support also. All his efforts notwithstanding, Timothy became too ill to continue. He eventually died and three days after his burial, his elder brother also died.

Timothy's wife was a bulwark of strength to him. She did not only encourage him to go on living, she gave him a reason for life. She testified to how Timothy helped her to deal with the challenges of living with a HIV-positive husband who was dying gradually. Together, they had apparently taken all the precaution needed. Andre E. De La Porte concludes Timothy's amazing story by noting that his wife remained HIV-negative (p138-139).

THE REALITY OF DIVINE HEALING

Perhaps the greatest source of encouragement and hope for women married to HIV-positive husbands is the reality of divine healing. This reality is often overlooked. Consequently, a challenge which should be seen as an avenue for proving the authenticity of God's power to heal is ignored. No doubt not every HIV-positive husband will be healed. But the fact that many have been miraculously healed by God should encourage any woman to stick with her husband and believe God for a miracle. In Exodus 15:26 God declares that "I am the God that heals you". In Malachi 4:2 He says "But to you who fear My name the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings; and you shall go out and grow fat like stall-fed calves".

If Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, there is nothing He cannot do. If he healed the blind, raised the dead and cleansed lepers he can deliver you or your husband and children from the scourge of HIV/AIDS. They that trust in the Lord cannot

be put to shame. God is dependable. He is trustworthy. He is Almighty. Put your faith in Him.

Chapter Fifteen

THE HUSBAND WHO IS AT WAR

WITH HIS CHILDREN

The nations are full of reports of increasing tensions between fathers and their children. The situation is so critical that parental conflicts with children have led to instability in families and even deaths.

Jesus alluded to this problem when he noted that in the end time a man's enemy would be members of his own household. "And then many will hate one another . . . And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold".

REPORTS OF WAR BETWEEN PARENTS

AND CHILDREN

• A father in Nairobi got into trouble with his daughter for raping her friend who had driven with him to see her off at the Jomo Kenyatta Airport.

• Another father was charged with assaulting his 11 year old son and given a three-year probation. The father had apparently supported his wife, the boy's step mother, who forced him to eat food and take tea mixed with human urine (Daily Nation, June 4, 2004).

• A 22 year old man was taken into custody at Chepsonoi in Nandi North Kenya after confessing to killing his 70-year-old father over a land dispute. The man secretly buried his father after killing him. Police had to exhume the late farmer for postmortem after it got a court order.

• A step-father raped his step-daughter of 16 years old. He denied it and even the

girl’s mother did not believe her. This compounded the problem as the girl felt abused and used by both husband and wife.

Many children are at loggerheads with their parents. The problem is particularly compounded when a father reneges in his parental obligations. Many irresponsible fathers are a pain in the neck of their children. On their part, there are also children who have caused untold heartaches and pains to their fathers. How can a woman cope with a husband who is at war with his own children? How does she balance her loyalty to the husband without jeopardizing the interests of her children. Let us suppose she has to choose between loyalty to her husband and support for her children, how can she revolve this challenge?

IDENTIFYING THE CAUSES OF CONFLICTS

You must identify the root causes of conflicts between your husband and your children if you don’t want to be caught in the crossfire between the two parties. Some of the things that bring disagreement between children and their parents include:

1. Failure or refusal of a father to provide support for his children.

2. Authoritarian or dictatorial tendencies.

3. Sexual harassment or abuse of a daughter by the father.

4. Favouritism to a particular child fueling sibling rivalry.

5. Parental opposition to the choice of profession career/religion. or a marriage partner of a child.

6. Cruelty by a father resulting to injury and even death.

7. Stubbornness, indiscipline and rebellion on the part of a child.

From this list it is clear that conflict could arise either because of improver behaviour of a father or a child. Improper behavaiour by a child can more easily be handled by the combined efforts of husband and wife. The real challenge comes when it is a father that is behaving improperly. The gravity of parental delinquency is not too glaring when the children are still very young. They still do not have a strong sense of right and wrong. Consequently there is little likelihood of a confrontation between them and their parents.

The situation, however, changes radically when the children become teenagers or young and independent men and women with their own concepts of right and wrong. It is at this point they are sometimes compelled to challenge and confront what they see as improper behaviour in their parents. Many parents still have a paternalistic view of these children at this point, so they take their opinions for granted and often do not see the danger of doing so.

FAILURE OR REFUSAL TO PROVIDE

SUPPORT

An 11-year-old boy in November 2004 walked the distance of more than 10 kilometers from a suburb in Kenya into a police station in Nairobi to request to be sent to school. His mother and father had abandoned him. The relative he was living with was transferred to another location and decided to leave him behind. The boy said he wanted to become a pilot.

Some fathers have no qualms in enjoying the pleasure of sex without taking up the responsibility of taking care of the children that are born. The number of

street children in different nations is a testimony to this irresponsibility. From Johannesburg to Cairo and from Nairobi to Russia, the cities are full of street children, some of who cannot identify their fathers. Many alcoholic fathers would rather spend their money fueling their dangerous habit than pay school fees for their children. In some cases children have had to drop out of school because their parents do not see their education as a priority. Money, even when it is available, is diverted to some other more important uses, by their parents' conception.

Girl children are worst hit by this parental neglect. Many women are in prostitution today because their fathers refused to take responsibility for their education and upbringing. The fact that it takes more money to educate a girl-child than a boy-child has compounded the plight of many girls. The disadvantages women face economically and socially compound the problem and perpetuate their underprivileged status. If a truly traditional man wants to train a child at all, he must elect to send the boys to school rather than the girls.

One man who had four children, all girls, vowed not to waste his money sending them to school. He bluntly told his wife that he will begin to pay school fees only when she gives him a boy-child. What do you do as a mother when your husband fails or refuses to meet the financial or educational needs of your children especially the female ones? Do you just fold your hands and do nothing because it is his responsibility?

COUNSELLING FOCUS

• You must become a strong advocate for your children even if you are not a trained lawyer. Through subtlety and persuasion try to convince your husband on the efficacy of education and the necessity for sending the children to school.

• Try to convince your husband that education is a human right and that your

children deserve to enjoy the benefits of this right.

• Enhance your employment skill and get involved in income generating ventures that can make you financially independent of your husband. This way you can take up the responsibility of educating your children if your husband fails or refuses to play his role.

Adaku, a woman in Enugu, Nigeria, was willing to do anything legitimate to send her children to school. Her son, a Bank Manager today, gave the testimony of how his mother would sometimes do the job of a taxi driver to get some money to send him back to school when his father lost his job and could no longer support him in school. She would take the family car, get him to sit in front with her, while she drove different strangers to their destinations for a fee. Adaku did not only make the best of an ugly situation; she taught her son how to allow God to make a way even where there seems to be no way.

• Teach your children basic money management skills and encourage them to be enterprising themselves. I know of children who go to school but are also involved in some petty business with which they help themselves financially. In Africa many students are not only selling the accessories to cell phones, but they are also providing services with their personal phones, for a fee. Develop a will to service and transfer business skills into your children. Everything, they say, reproduces after its own kind. Reproduce your mercantile instincts in your children. There is no room for excuses. Don’t let your children become bitter because their father refused to send them to school.

• Explore avenues for government or corporate scholarships. Get your children to apply. A very intelligent girl whose father refused to send her to school went from secondary school to university, courtesy of a corporate scholarship. Today she has a Ph. D and is making a difference in her society.

• Practice the art of delayed gratification and teach your children to practice same. This is the act of denying yourself privileges today that you might invest in resources to give yourself a better future. There may be things you need today which you have the money to buy. But compared to the education of your children these things could be left out for now. Identify your priorities and go for

the things which are absolutely a necessity for your survival. You don't need 10 pairs of shoes when 8 of these can pay for a child's tuition. Be wise.

AUTHORITARIAN OR DICTATORIAL

TENDENCIES

Many children are labouring under the yoke of parental Hitlers who, if not restrained, could exterminate their children in the name of purifying their family stock. Fathers in this category are strict, unbending and unyielding to compromise. They are the type that heap punishment upon punishment on children. They are authoritarian and domineering.

A mother must protect the children from such a man within the bounds of decency and wisdom. When your husband begins to rage against the children in an unwholesome manner, don't attempt to confront him harshly or else he could turn you into a punching bag. It's no point coming into the crossfire of verbal bullets if you don't have the wisdom and discretion to calm your husband down. It's no point pouring petrol into an already smouldering conflagration.

Teach the children never to answer back to their father. Help them to remain calm and to only speak when he has let off all his explosive steam. An authoritarian husband who is often tempestuous would normally also explode against his wife, not just his children. How you deal with this challenge in moments of great tension will serve as an object lesson on what the children could do to deal with their father's character flaws.

In moments of intimacy when your husband is relaxed, encourage him to realize that life is a coat of many colours, that one man's opinions should not always

override the many shades of “colours” that could enrich his own life. Encourage him to sometimes listen to the opinions of the children. Remind him that just as God gave every man a free will to make choices and sometimes mistakes so also he expects parents to allow a measure of liberty for their children to make choices. Reassure him that even when the children make mistakes, God will help them to learn from their own mistakes. The ability to make intelligent choices is indispensable for the development of an individual’s personality. Teach your husband that by allowing the children some space he would be developing their intellectual capacity and leadership potentials.

PARENTAL SEXUAL HARRASSMENT AND ABUSE

OF THEIR CHILDREN

This is an increasing spectacle in modern society. It creates confusion in families and pitches mothers against their own daughters. The spectacle of incest is most glaring in homes where a man is married to a woman who has a relatively grown up daughter from another relationship. Where the child grew up in another home before moving in with her mother there is little or no parental bonding between this child and the man who is her step-father. Some men are attracted to these step daughters because they see them as a younger, obviously more beautiful, version of their wives. Where such a man has no moral restraint, integrity or respect for his wife it is not unusual for him to sexually harass his own step-daughter.

A woman is usually devastated to know that her husband is after her own daughter. Helen was in such a dilemma. Her daughter, Grace, had been behaving in a funny manner for months. Grace, 18, asked her mother’s permission to move into a boarding house. Asked why she preferred the boarding house to a proper home where she is more comfortable, she had no cogent explanation. Helen noted, however, that Grace had stopped talking to her husband Greg. Whenever she did, it was in monosyllabuses. Grace could sometimes be so rude to her step-father that it took the intervention of her mother to get her to

immediately apologize. Even when she tendered an apology, it was grudgingly done. Helen noted that this was not the Grace she knew. This was not the same girl who respected, honoured and called her husband “daddy”. She noted further that Grace had stopped calling Greg “daddy”.

The tension between her daughter and husband was becoming too unbearable for her. Helen began to pray that God will tell her what was wrong. She had confronted Greg on why the relationship between him and Grace had plummeted from the Olympian height where it was before. Greg merely told her that Grace was only being stupid and childish. But she knew the maturity of her daughter. She knew that Grace was in fact too mature for her age. There must be something wrong with her irrational behaviour. It was while Helen was still praying and pondering on the challenges between her husband and daughter that God gave her a dream. It was a dream in which she saw Greg trying to rape Grace. It was so vivid that she woke up weeping, a phenomenon that had already started in the dream.

Helen promptly arranged a dinner date with her daughter and shared her dream. Grace looked shocked, bemused and began to cry. She wept profusely, then went on to tell Helen how her husband had attempted to rape her. Grace shared how she escaped Greg’s clutches and the continued harassment she had faced from him since that incident.

This story recounts a failed attempt of rape by a man who should have stood in loco parentis for his step-daughter. True, it had its traumatic effects on the victim. Nevertheless, it is nothing compared to the countless numbers of children who are physically defiled by their fathers. One girl in Port Harcourt, Nigeria, recounted that her father disvirgined her when she was 17 years old. He continued to violate her against her will until she was in her mid-20s. When she could no longer stand it she found a convenient excuse to leave home after she finished her university education and got a job. She moved into her own house and met a boyfriend to whom she felt at liberty to narrate her story. She had carried this burden too long to keep it to herself any more. She needed to talk to

somebody who would understand.

Suppose that “somebody” was her own mother. How should she respond to this trauma? Some marriages have collapsed because of the incestuous relationship between a father and a daughter. The mothers or wives could not just stand the wickedness of being made to share their husbands with their own daughters. In other instances, children have been made pregnant by their fathers. Some have carried the children to full term and delivered babies. There was a case in which a daughter delivered a twin by her own father.

SYMPTOMS OF PARENTAL SEXUAL HARRASSMENT

There are no easy or quick fix solutions to dealing with sexual harassment or rape by a father against his own child. My prayer is that it never happens in your family. Nevertheless, where it has happened there are guidelines to dealing with the problem.

Look for symptoms and nip the problem in the bud before it is aggravated. These symptoms include the scenario of fathers who:

- Tease their daughters with intimate and foul language.
- Touch them on intimate parts of their bodies.
- Peep at them when they are taking a bath or dressing up.
- Leave pornographic materials where these could be seen by their daughters.

• Allow themselves to walk naked from the bathroom to the room, so their daughters could see their nakedness.

• Try to give their daughters extended hugs and kisses that are unnatural in a father-daughter relationship.

• Tell lewd jokes and stories geared towards exciting sexual passion in their girls.

• Use every excuse to lure their daughters to trips, holidays or picnics in which their wives would naturally not be invited or encouraged to come.

• Tune the TV channels that display explicit sex and violence.

• Encourage their daughters to drink and would themselves most likely be alcoholics.

• Be jealous of any relationship between their daughters and any other man.

COUNSELLING FOCUS

Where you notice any of these symptoms act promptly:

1. Call your husband's attention to these improper conducts and tell him your deep concern about their consequences.

2. Give a motherly counsel to your daughter to be on the alert without demeaning your husband or demonizing him. You need wisdom to talk to your daughter in this respect. Just tell her the general expectations in a father-daughter relationship. Reassure her that you trust her to maintain the standards and that you are counting on her.

3. Pray and shield your daughter from harassment and abuse. Pray also that God will restrain your husband.

4. Deal with the ancestral foundations behind incestuous affairs. This would demand repentance, renunciation and restitution of past sins.

5. Seek for help when the worst has already happened. Get your daughter out of the scene. Ensure she gets the right counsel and therapy so the scars of abuse can be healed before she gets married to any man.

6. Report the incident to your local church pastor if he is mature to handle such an issue. Compel your husband to go for counselling and therapy if he is repentant.

7. Invite the police if you ever think that your life or that of your daughter is in danger. You owe yourself and your children this responsibility.

Whatever happens remember that this is a family problem of a complicated nature. If it is not properly handled its consequences can resonate from generation to generation. Therefore seek for the reconciliation of you and your husband, you and your daughter and her father. This may take time, but seek for a holistic reconciliation of all the concerned parties including the other children where they know about the incident. Only through repentance and the application of mercy, grace and forgiveness can complete reconciliation be experienced.

The same kind of wisdom displayed in dealing with the conflict between your husband and your children in the areas of his authoritarian tendencies and sexual abuses is needed in handling his opposition to their choice of a profession or a life partner. Use the double-edged sword to appeal to your husband, while restraining your children. Prayer is indispensable, so also is godly counsel whenever you have come to what seems like the end of the road. Encourage a round table open discussion of issues. This will reduce tension between your children and their father. Always act as a reconciliator. Win the confidence of all the parties. Above all, win the confidence of God through complete dependence on the Holy Spirit. There is no challenge He cannot help you meet. He will comfort you in moments of deep trauma. He will guide you into all truth and He will restore peace and harmony in your family.

Chapter Sixteen

ORDINARY WIVES WHO BEAT THEIR HUSBANDS EXTRAORDINARILY

The gender profiling of women is often very negative. Women are viewed as "weak, worrisome and quarrelsome". They are conceived as only worthy to be restricted or relegated to the kitchen and kept quiet at church. Lorry Lutz in Women As Risk Takers For God has outlined the historical foundations of this negative profiling. She shows how many generations of philosophers and theologians have tended to prove that women are lacking in intelligence, sexually seductive and emotionally unstable.

Socrates (470 B.C.), for instance, taught that a woman was half way between a man and an animal. In other words, she is half man and half animal. Aristotle (384 B.C.) argued that we should look at the female state of being as though it was a deformity. And Philo, a Jewish writer who was Apostle Paul's contemporary, believed that "a woman is endowed by nature with little sense".

Even the Church fathers had a very negative view of women. Luz writes that Origen, a third century North African Scholar, wrote that "certainly women should teach what is good, but men should not sit and listen to a woman . . . Even if she says admirable things or . . . saintly things, that is of little consequence since they come from the mouth of a woman". Martin Luther, the great apostle of the Reformation, argued that if we "take women from their housewifery [role] . . . they are good for nothing." And the famous John Knox who cried out in prayer to God saying, "Give me Scotland or else I die" in 1558 wrote that "nature doth paint them . . . to be weak, frail, impatient and foolish and experience hath declared them to be inconstant, variable, cruel and lacking the spirit of counsel".

My personal experience with women generally shows that none of these statements from great theologians and philosophers reflect the true nature and

intelligence of women. On the contrary many women have demonstrated a resilient capacity for endurance, an amazing degree of excellence and a creative ability to overcome the weakness of men in high and low places. They have overcome hatred with love, and excelled over unhealthy attitudes with the fruit of the Spirit.

We shall conclude this book, a sequel to How To Beat Your Husband, with the amazing story of ordinary women who thoroughly “beat” their husbands in difficult and sometimes near impossible conditions. They are ordinary women, but they did extraordinary things. Their stories should encourage you to know that with God nothing shall be impossible. Their testimonies will inspire you to know that the human capacity to overcome great odds is still alive and well.

MIRACLE: THE WOMAN WITH A

MIRACULOUS STORY

She was married to a man called Tunde in Lagos, Nigeria. Tunde was a typical traditionalist with a patriarchal mentality. He loved and wanted male children very badly. When his wife Miracle, delivered a baby girl he was unhappy, even though he did not show it much. Tunde sincerely hoped that the second baby would be a boy. Unfortunately for him, it was another girl.

Tunde, this time, openly expressed his disappointment. He even threatened his wife with desertion if she failed to give him a boy when next she was pregnant. Again Miracle conceived and delivered another girl. For her the joy of delivery was turned into instant sadness once she knew that the baby was another girl. Terrified by the spectacle of being abandoned she cried to God for intervention. Tunde barely welcomed her back from the hospital. For weeks he did not bother to touch the new born baby. Miracle tried to make the best of her bad situation. She was not bitter against her husband. Neither did she stop ministering to him.

Miracle knew that she had no hand in the choice of her children's gender. She knew that baby girls are not inferior to baby boys. She cried to God to intervene in her marriage. The fact that Tunde hated her and her "harem of girls", as he sarcastically called them, did not alter her love and respect for her husband. Tunde's attitude was already generating hatred for her amongst her in-laws. Some of them joined forces with Tunde to openly insult and threaten her. Miracle kept her cool and calm composure whenever her in-laws made caustic remarks about her inability to give her husband a male child. Some even accused her of denying Tunde of a worthy successor. They suggested the need for him to take another wife—or go outside to get a male child from another woman. It was the spectacle of sharing her husband with another woman that really broke Miracle's heart.

One day she withdrew to an isolated place and cried unto God for three whole days. She prayed that God will shut the mouth of her adversaries. She made a demand on God to preserve her family and glorify His name. Not long after her retreat, she became pregnant for the fourth time. Tunde by now had given up on her. He was at an advanced stage of looking for a second wife whom he hoped would bear him a male child. Miracle was fully aware of all his clandestine moves; yet she did not revile him. But she was content on allowing God's will to be done.

While she was pregnant with her fourth child, Tunde did not one day ask how she felt. He did not give her money for antenatal care. In fact, on the day she entered into labour, he refused to take her to the hospital. She had to hire a taxi while Tunde drove off to a nearby pub to drink. He was still there drinking when someone brought the news that his wife had delivered. He looked at the messenger and inquisitively sneered: "Is it not another girl? Leave me alone. My wife is of no use to me". The messenger took a deep breath, looked at him in the face and said, "No, your wife did not deliver another girl. She had four boys".

Tunde could not believe his ears. He was so stupefied by the news that he

abandoned his drink and ran away for two weeks. This was how his search for another wife ended. Miracle was not bitter; she was more than willing to receive her husband when he eventually returned home after two weeks.

The Lord is truly mighty. He will always honour those whose heart are prefect towards Him. “He raises the poor from the ash heap, to set them among princes and make them inherit the throne of glory. For the pillars of the earth are the Lord’s and He has set the world upon them. He will guard the feet of His saints, but the wicked shall be silent in darkness. For by strength no man shall prevail. The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken in pieces; from heaven He will thunder against them. The Lord will judge the ends of the earth. He will give strength to His king, and exalt the horn of His anointed” (1st Samuel 2:8-10).

URAI: HARBINGER OF LOVE AND

STRENGTH IN CRISIS

Urai and Arthit were married and lived 30 kilometers South of Chiang Mai in Thailand. They had a six-year-old daughter called Nut. Their story of love, commitment and loyalty was first told by Prakai Nontawasee of the Church of Christ in Thailand.

Urai and Arthit discovered that they were both HIV-positive when they had a medical checkup in connection with their desire to have a second child after Nut. The discovery was traumatic for both husband and wife, but more so for Arthit who felt that he was responsible for bringing the calamity to his family. Arthit was furious with himself. He just could not deal with the guilt and anguish that he became suicidal. He saw no reason to live and decided to end it all.

Urai, however, felt differently. She was willing to deal squarely with the crisis she and her husband faced. Urai took responsibility for her husband, although she too was suffering from the HIV scourge. She encouraged him to hang on to life. She became his bulwark of courage and strength. “Whatever happens, we’ll face it together,” Urai told her husband. She was firm and resolute even as her husband was slipping in and out of depression.

Arthit’s situation was compounded when he was diagnosed with meningitis. He felt so defeated that he still wanted to end it all. Neighbours compounded his problem with stigmatization. They stopped visiting Arthit and his wife for fear that coming near them would lead to their infection. Urai’s business in the market also suffered greatly. Although she too was HIV-positive, she continued to go to the market very early in the morning where she sold fresh vegetables. But with news of her HIV status nobody wanted to buy vegetables from her anymore. Urai still did not despair, but continued to go to the market.

To compound the couple’s problems relatives came and took Nut away from them for fear that she too will contact the virus. Arthit missed his daughter so dearly. This made him more depressed. Yet Urai continued to encourage her husband to hang on to life and to hope for the best. She would sometimes wake up in the dark to cry for a few minutes, but was always careful never to let her husband see her cry. She could not bear to see how he would respond if he saw tears in her eyes.

One day the Church of Christ in Thailand AIDS Ministers Team visited them. They gave Urai and her husband basic medicines and provided them with a chance to express their fears openly. The hope the church team brought began to yield dividends. Nut was returned to her parents. Arthit began to improve, although this improvement in his health was short lived. He developed new skin lesions which really frightened Urai. He could barely move and was suffering so severely that Urai actually thought the end had come. She wept, believing for a divine intervention. Again the Church of Christ team visited, gave medications to Urai’s husband who began to make slow but very painful improvements.

In all their travail, Urai was her husband's source of strength. Although she too was suffering from the infection, she remained the breadwinner, selling fresh vegetables in the market. It was not long before people noticed Urai's courage. Even those who snubbed her before began to recognize her worth. Urai started an informal counselling session for other people suffering from HIV. Her home became a gathering point. A support group was raised—and met in her house. Through Urai's courage, friendship and encouragement, her husband saw a new reason for living.

God can use the mess in your life to proclaim a mighty message to those around you. He wants to use you to bless those that have despised and rejected you. The persecuted can become an instrument of perfection. The injured can become a healing balm to the very people who caused them injury. Arthit felt bitter for transferring the virus to Urai, his wife. Yet without bitterness she still loved her husband enough to lay down her life for him.

In times of crisis we can draw extraordinary strength from God to love the unlovable. The sacrifice of laying down your life for those who have hurt you is the message of the cross. It is the message of substitutionary sacrifice. Jesus took the punishment of those who crucified him to teach a lesson that we too can become a blessing to those who hurt us badly. Every wife must act as her husband's agent of redemption. God desires to use women to restore whatever the devil has stolen from their husbands. Your readiness to be used will be dependent on whether you are willing to love the unlovable. Those who will overlook the terrible things their husbands have done to them and still seek their welfare are those who can "beat" their husbands. These are the agents of redemption. These are the women who will suffer at the hands of the very husbands they are sent to redeem. Yet these are the people the word of God refers to when it states that "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed". There is a glory waiting for you. Learn to pay the price and God will bring you into the cloud of glory.

STEPS TO SALVATION

Acknowledge—". . . Be merciful unto me a sinner"-Luke 18:13

Confess—"If we confess our sin, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"—1 John 1:9

Repent—"Except ye repent ye shall likewise perish—Luke 13:3. "Repent ye therefore, and be converted that your sins may be blotted out…"—Acts 3:19.

Forsake—"Let the wicked forsake his ways and the unrighteous man his thoughts and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon"—Isaiah 55:7

Believe—"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved but he that believeth not shall be damned"—Mark 16:16

Receive—"He came unto His own and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believed on His name. "John 1:11-12

Abide—"Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me"—John 15:4.

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